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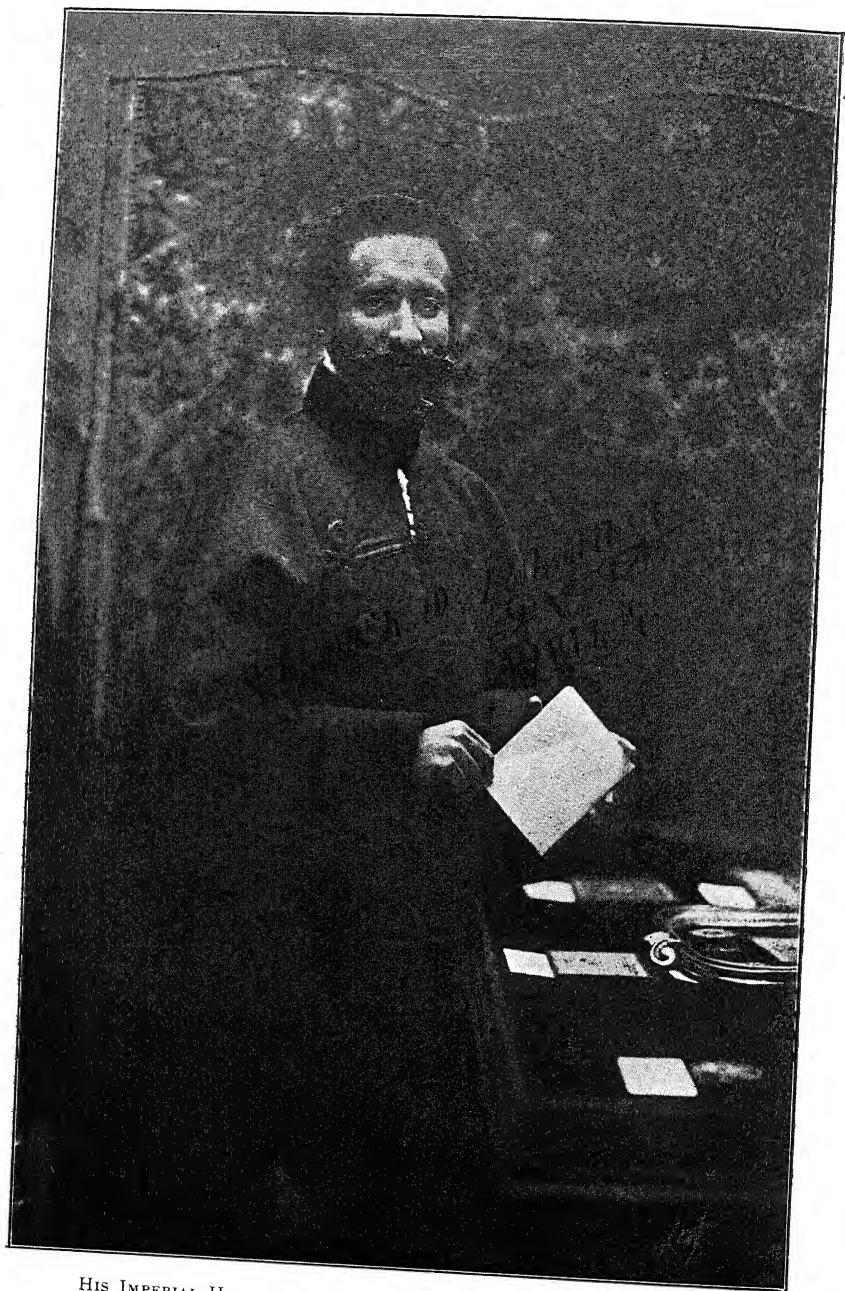




IN THE COUNTRY OF THE BLUE NILE







HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS TAFARI MAKONNEN, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., LL.D.  
Heir to the Throne and Regent of the Empire of Ethiopia.

# IN THE COUNTRY OF THE BLUE NILE

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*"Unconquered Abyssinia as it is to-day," etc.*

With a Foreword by

Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen

K.C.V.O., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.



DUCKWORTH

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE sympathetic reception which was given to my first attempt, four years ago, to give to European readers an idea of Abyssinia and its peoples, the events which have subsequently combined to bring Abyssinia more prominently into the modern world, and the fact that my wife and I have been enabled to make two more visits to the country since then, have combined to encourage me to publish the present account of the last trek we undertook there, and to endeavour to present a picture of recent happenings in, and in connection with, Abyssinia, and of the problems with which the country itself and those who have dealings with it are confronted.

Trekking in Abyssinia is full of interest—it is indeed a sheer delight ; and to the interest of travel in the country must be added that derived from association with the very remarkable people of this strange land and from any attempt to understand their mentality and conditions.

The gulf which separates the mediæval State of Ethiopia from the modern world can only be bridged by understanding, and understanding can only be born of sympathy, that feeling which, according to the standard definition, “ enables a person to enter into and in part share another’s feelings.”

While endeavouring therefore to add to the story of our trek a further sketch of the very strange and anomalous condition of the country, its people and institutions, I have tried to do so in such a way as to enable outsiders also to visualise these aspects from the point of view of the Abyssinians themselves.

If I succeed in doing this, and at the same time in inducing a few Abyssinians to realise the views of the outside world on their own country, then, indeed, I shall have succeeded beyond my most sanguine hopes.

For of misunderstanding comes trouble, and it has always seemed to me in my travels, even in Europe, that lack of

understanding of each other's mentality is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the different nations of the world—lack of appreciation of the fact that every nation has a mentality of its own, each differing from the others in a greater or lesser degree.

It would be egotistical on my part to claim the present book as entirely my own, for it is really due as much to my wife as to myself; the laborious work of reading the proof is the least of the very valuable assistance she has given me, and to her inspiration and most helpful suggestions and criticism I owe a very great deal.

I have been much helped in the preparation of these pages by friends, both Abyssinian and other: first and foremost I would like to express my indebtedness to His Imperial Highness Tafari Makonnen, Heir to the Throne and Regent of Abyssinia, who, in addition to causing the list of the Kings of his country to be compiled for me, has been more than kind in every way.

To Mr. Philip Zaphiro, of the British Legation, I am most grateful for the very valuable help he has always so willingly given me out of the fullness of his knowledge; and amongst several others I must single out Blata Heruy as a recipient of my cordial thanks.

I also desire to record my thanks to the Royal Geographical Society for permission to reproduce the maps appearing in the book, and also the substance of a lecture which I delivered before that Society: to the Editors of the *Edinburgh Review* and of the *Morning Post*, my thanks are also due for permission to reproduce material of mine appearing in those publications.

C. F. REY.

August 1927.

## FOREWORD

THERE is far more in the following pages than merely a description of the author's travels "in the Country of the Blue Nile." In the course of his numerous visits to Abyssinia Mr. Rey has not only made extensive journeys, but has also thoroughly studied the history of this fascinating country, its administration, its political questions, and the possibilities of its economic development. And these he has most fully and lucidly put before us.

Two-thirds of the book are devoted to the arduous trip undertaken by the author and his wife over country in part untraversed by other Europeans, to Debra Markos and back ; and the description of their magnificent reception by Ras Hailu of Gojam and of the absence of serious difficulties on their journeys goes far to prove that, given patience, tact, a genius for organisation, and a sense of humour, the well-meaning European traveller has little to fear from either the natives or the natural obstacles of the country.

But after the trip has been described, and due acknowledgment made of the courtesy of the inhabitants and the charm of the landscape, it is the economic prospects and the situation of Abyssinia itself in relation to the other Powers that really form the chief subject of interest. Here we see Ras Tafari, an enlightened man amongst a crew of semi-civilised chieftains, trying with might and main to extricate his land, full of natural resources, from the chaos of ages and bring it into line with the modern ideas of civilisation. But however he may work, it is not in one man's lifetime that Abyssinia can be re-born and adapt itself to European ideals. The hopeless system of administration, depending largely on what each Ras can screw out of his unfortunate subjects ; the happy-go-lucky, indolent character of the people, who, while anxious to enjoy the advantages of modern inventions, neglect to develop their own property and stubbornly resist the encroachment of foreigners—or even of foreign advisers ; the total absence of financial

system ; the reactionary dead-weight of a mediæval and superstitious Church, which, while hostile to genuine education, strives to dominate the State ; the suspicion, bred of ignorance, of all European negotiations and influence, directed though the latter may be to the improvement of the country ; the slavery question ; the undeveloped resources of the land—all these things are clearly shown forth for the enlightenment of the average Briton who has never taken the trouble to inform himself regarding this queer but interesting, and possibly commercially successful, highland corner of Africa.

Things have changed since the first and only visit to Abyssinia of the writer of this foreword some thirty years ago. But what strikes him most is that, whereas the capital itself seems to have changed and modernised itself out of all resemblance to the Addis Ababa of 1897, the remainder of the country appears to stand almost exactly as it did then. Twenty-five years of illuminating government under Menelik and Tafari—for we can hardly look on the years of Taitu and Lij Yasu as particularly luminous—seem to have produced but little effect on the internal administration, whilst they have left the national character almost untouched. A rapid development of the country was in no case to have been expected ; yet those who, like the author, know Abyssinia well and have its interests at heart are convinced that under a succession of strong and enlightened rulers the people will gradually come to see that the development of their country under European guidance will prove of greater advantage to themselves than their present proud and stiff-necked attitude, and that if they wish to enjoy equality with more highly civilised Powers they must first prove themselves worthy of that privilege. Till then, in any case, *Festina lente* must be their watchword.

It only remains to express our sincere hope that should Mr. Rey ever carry out any further exploration in Abyssinia, he will provide us with full information as to the unknown course and tributaries of the great and mysterious river, parts of which he has so vividly described in these pages.

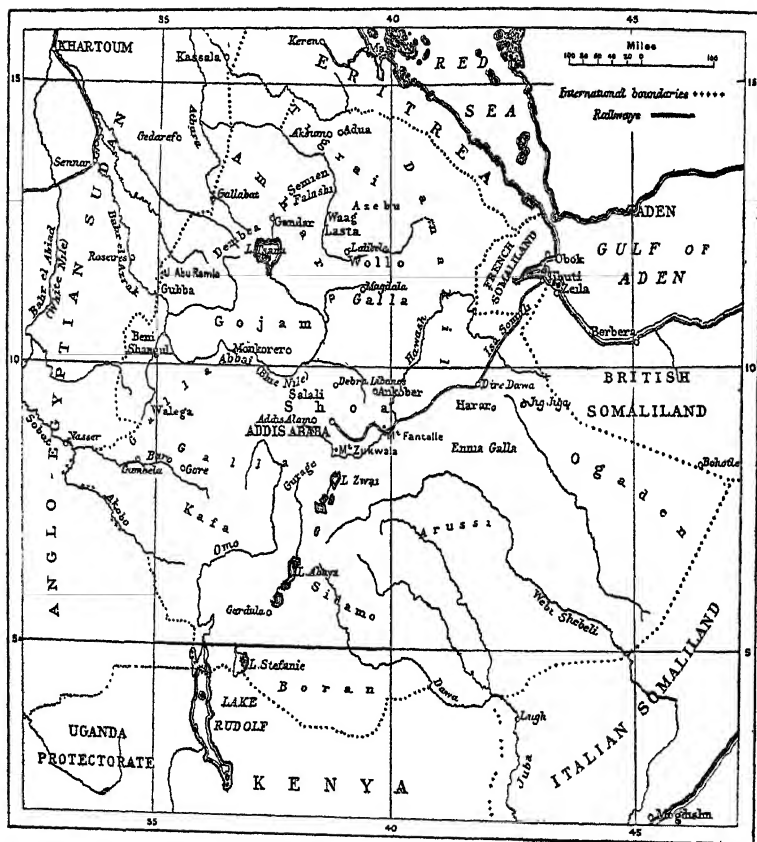
July 1927.

EDWARD GLEICHEN.

TO MY WIFE



# ABYSSINIA



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# IN THE COUNTRY OF THE BLUE NILE

## CHAPTER I

### THE ENTRY INTO ABYSSINIA

THE connection between Abyssinia and aeroplanes is not at first sight obvious, more especially as aircraft are not allowed to enter the country. Nevertheless, it is to Abyssinia that we owe our first record of these craft, for when the Queen of Sheba left Jerusalem on her return to Abyssinia King Solomon is said to have included among the many presents he made her "a machine to ride in the air."

Whether the Queen was able to achieve a non-stop flight from Jerusalem to Axum, or whether some mechanical defect involved a forced landing or a crash en route we do not know. But I am inclined to suspect the latter probability, for we hear no more of the "machine to ride in the air," and, as has been stated above, none may now cross the frontier.

That is a pity, for the journey there is none too comfortable, and the diminutive craft in which the passage of the Red Sea has to be made from Aden to Jibuti leave much to be desired.

On arrival in the country, however, one is no longer shocked by the conditions which seem to have greeted that most remarkable and intrepid traveller James Bruce at the end of the eighteenth century, and which he described in such graphic terms some years after he had returned from his long sojourn in Abyssinia and his adventurous journeys undertaken "to discover the source of the Nile." He says :

"The situation of the country was barely known, no more; in parts surrounded by impenetrable forests,

where from the beginning the beasts had established a sovereignty uninterrupted by man; in part by vast deserts of moving sands, where nothing was to be found that had the breath of life; these terrible barriers enclosed men more bloody and ferocious than the beasts themselves, and more fatal to travellers than the sands that encompassed them; and, thus shut up, they had been growing every day more barbarous, and defied, by rendering it dangerous, the curiosity of travellers of every nation."

And after making due allowance for the writer's well-known peculiarities, there seems little reason to doubt but that the picture was at that time not very far removed from the truth, though a traveller in Abyssinia to-day would hardly recognise it, especially if he confined his visits to Addis Ababa, the capital of the country.

But even to-day there are, fortunately, still some parts of the world which civilisation and tourists have not spoilt for the traveller, and a few of these are yet to be found in Abyssinia outside Addis Ababa, where life proceeds much as it must have done a thousand years or more ago, where centuries-old manners, customs, and rites still hold the field, and where the primitive virtues and vices have not been displaced by the modern editions of the same qualities.

That such should be the case in Abyssinia is hardly surprising when one considers her ancient story, and her geographical position.

The course of events and the acts of man have combined with the forces of nature to isolate this strange land and to cut it off from communication with the rest of the world until comparatively recently, and, although from the earliest known times efforts have been made to penetrate into the country—either with the object of reaching the head waters of the Nile or for other purposes—its very situation was for centuries unknown.

Even Prince Henry the Navigator imagined that the

Nile and the Senegal both took their rise in the same mountains, and sent an expedition up the latter river to find the Nile, with instructions to the leader to blow up any cataracts that might impede the passage of his boats !

Though, as might be expected, this expedition failed to reach Ethiopia—or the Land of Prester John as the Portuguese persisted (quite wrongly) in calling it—other travellers managed to get there, the first arriving about the end of the fifteenth century. From then onwards at intervals individuals and expeditions dribbled into the country, to be detained involuntarily for their life-time as more or less honoured guests, or ignominiously expelled or dealt with more drastically. Generally they came from the north-east, by way of Massawa, where, after stifling in the sandy coast belt, they struggled painfully up on to the Ethiopian massif through the rough and inaccessible passes that lead up to it over the surrounding mountains.

Most of the other means of access into Abyssinia present the same features and the same difficulties. Cut in two by the Great Rift Valley, the Abyssinian Empire of to-day consists of two great plateaux, the main one lying to the north, forming the old Ethiopian kingdom, and the other lying south of the Rift Valley, which may be described geographically as the Somaliland plateau.

The whole of the country—as large as Britain, France, Belgium, and Holland combined—is dotted with ranges and peaks and intersected in every direction with streams and ravines ; whilst all around its three thousand miles of frontier it drops down into hot and unhealthy deserts, which for centuries formed an effective barrier against both ingress and egress.

Later on man added fresh barriers, and little by little the surrounding territory, including the whole of the original Abyssinian coast-line, fell into the hands of other Powers.

The story of the encirclement of Abyssinia is typical of the haphazard way in which European Powers drifted into Africa.

Abyssinian Emperors have always claimed to possess the country as far as the sea, but in point of fact the African coast-line of the Red Sea had been in the Pashalik of Egypt since the fifteenth century from Suez to Mersa Dongola, and from that point as far as Zeila the Turks claimed the coast.

The actual position was that Turkish sovereignty, except at Massawa, was pretty well nominal, and Abyssinian rule all along the coast had ceased to exist; the Danakil chiefs, whose territories intervened between Abyssinia and the Sea, were to all intents and purposes quite independent, and are even now by no means amenable to the rule of their nominal overlords in many districts.

In 1839 the Compagnie Nanto-Bordelaise sent a French vessel on the delightfully casual mission of buying a port somewhere in the Red Sea, and that expedition made a treaty with the local Danakil chiefs whereby for the trifling sum of 2,000 dollars they purchased the village of Edd, with a small piece of the surrounding country. Although the rights then acquired were transferred to the French Consul at Massawa, and later on by him to another French enterprise who still claimed them in 1862, nothing came of this venture, possibly because the French Government never ratified the Treaty against which a protest had been made by the Porte, and Edd is now included in Italian Eritrea.

The second French attempt was more successful. Musha Island, at the entrance to the Bay of Tajura, had been bought from its inhabitants by the British in 1840 for ten bags of rice, but through the efforts of the French Consul at Aden the Danakil chiefs at Obok were induced to surrender that port and the country round it to the French for a sum of 50,000 francs in 1862. Nothing was done to develop the place for over twenty years, and it was not until 1883, when French activity began to take place in Africa generally, that the possibilities of Obok again drew the attentions of the home authorities to the desolate spot.

They were no doubt alarmed lest Abyssinian trade should be diverted to Assab, which the Italians had recently

occupied ; and so, in spite of the fact that the East India Company had made Treaty stipulations with the Sultan of Tajura so long ago as 1840 not to make foreign treaties without consulting the Government of Aden, a series of arrangements were entered into in 1884 and 1885 between the French Government and the Sultans of Gobad and Tajura culminating in the establishment of the French colony now known as the *Côte française des Somalis*, containing the port of Jibuti.

Thus was blocked one of Abyssinia's exits to the sea.

A very similar procedure had been going on farther north. In 1869 the Italian Rubattino Shipping Company had acquired from the local chief the Bay of Assab, in the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb ; further territory at Raheita and elsewhere was occupied ; and ultimately the Italians took over these lands and formed the colony which was later on to become the present Eritrea, the port of Massawa being occupied in 1883, cutting off yet another of Abyssinia's doorways to the world.

Egyptian expansion, which had been started by Ismail in 1863, threatened Abyssinia even more severely ; the Khedive is indeed supposed to have contemplated the conquest of the entire country, but his heavy defeats by the Abyssinians in 1875 brought that idea to a conclusion. He seized Bogos in the north, Berbera and Harar in the south, and bought Zeila from Turkey ; and, though Bogos and Harar (neither of which touch the coast) reverted later on to Abyssinia, the ports of Zeila and Berbera have since 1884 formed part of British Somaliland, thus closing two more doors on Abyssinia.

Farther south the acquisition of the coastal territory known as Italian Somaliland had proceeded by the usual though more gradual stages between 1888 and 1905, and so the encirclement of Abyssinia on its coastal side, begun by the Arabs, continued by the Turks, and then by Egypt, was completed by Europe.

To-day, Italian Eritrea, French Somaliland, British

Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, Kenya, Uganda, and the Sudan enclose Abyssinia; and, while caravan routes run from most of them, the only real link with the outside is the Franco-Ethiopian Railway, from Jibuti, the port of French Somaliland, to Addis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia—a distance of some five hundred miles.

This is indeed Jibuti's main if not only claim to importance, apart from such coaling facilities as it is able to offer to French steamers; for oil they have to go to Aden.

But there is, not unnaturally, keen rivalry between the French, Italian, and English ports on the Red Sea, for Abyssinian and other local trade, and Aden has had to reduce its port rates considerably to meet competition. But why the Aden authorities chose to hamper their own trade by charging merchants 400 rupees (about £30) a year for the telephone service, and how it is that in all the years we have occupied it they have failed to instal a water-supply, are matters past comprehension. At Jibuti the annual cost of a telephone is 400 francs—little more than a tenth—and there is an excellent water-supply. Massawa, too, has succeeded in diverting Sana trade from Aden by—*inter alia*—declaring that coffee imported direct from Hodeida to Massawa shall be treated as Italian produce, and so pay neither port dues nor customs duties at Massawa.

But Massawa is hardly likely to capture Abyssinian trade from Aden, and still less from Jibuti, on account of its being the railway terminus.

The railway can do the journey from Jibuti to Addis Ababa in three days, although it has been known to take as long as a week when the rains have removed part of the "permanent" way, or an accident has interfered with the normal procedure. But by no stretch of the imagination can it be described as a *voyage de luxe*, though I have heard it said that the only good thing about Jibuti was the train that left it.

Three days of nearly eleven hours each, in carriages that have long since seen their best days, slowly jolting over a



JIBUTI (FRENCH SOMALILAND)  
The "Place" in the European quarter.



JIBUTI (FRENCH SOMALILAND)  
The Camel Market in the native quarter.





track that seems the antithesis of "permanent," are apt to seem long, but I am bound to admit that the scenes in the train itself and along the line go far towards relieving the tedium of the journey.

The natives travel in great trucks roofed-over but open at the sides, and, as the train curls and winds like a snake on its slow passage up through the mountains, one can see the passengers squatting on the footboards, and clinging perilously to the projecting platforms of the cars, brushed by the undergrowth through which the train ploughs its way. Down the centre of these long open cars are boards along which are stacked the rifles and spears of the passengers, and the bundles of odds and ends which seem to constitute their worldly possessions. At the halts, referred to from motives of politeness as stations, native boys or women go about selling tea or coffee in filthy mugs, eggs, slabs of native bread, bits of sugar-cane, and jars of milk covered with a layer of dirt and flies.

There is much bargaining and fighting for these "refreshments," fingering of solids and sniffing of liquids; and all the time there is a ceaseless chattering and yelling, until the train whistles and the engine, after two or three fearful jerks, gets the train off, when the passengers run alongside their moving car and scramble or are pulled in amid much excitement.

I am sorry to have to say that the excitement is often increased by the fact that the hungry passengers have omitted to pay for their purchases, or have tried to pass off an inadequate coin or one that is not current. I saw one half-caste representative of a dago race drink off a calabash of milk (which I admit required courage) and then deliberately refuse to pay the wretched native girl; another took a stick of sugar-cane out of a bundle just as the train was pulling out and pretended there was no time to meet the bill. So it is hardly surprising that the vendors have become suspicious and insist on "cash on delivery" or before-hand—which means much chattering and recrimination. I shall

have more to say about these representatives or half-representatives of so-called "European" races in Abyssinia later on.

The scenery along the line gets more and more attractive as the journey proceeds. Commencing at sea-level in the super-heated desolation of French Somaliland, with its endless vista of rock and sand, the line rises continually and rapidly through the foothills of Abyssinia until it finally reaches the 8,000-foot plateau on which Addis Ababa stands, the vegetation changes from sub-tropical to temperate, and the climate becomes pleasanter and fresher almost hourly.

At intervals along the line can be seen native habitations, which change quite noticeably as one gets farther into Abyssinia. All the way right up from Jibuti itself to past the Hawash River the native huts are mere hovels; just kennels of reed and mud and filthy bits of home-made cloth, not big enough to house a large-sized dog; and yet in them live a family, its chickens, a goat or two, and possibly some other beasts, to say nothing of the small "live-stock" which keep the people busy scratching themselves. Of course these are not Abyssinians, but some of their various subject races; the Abyssinian huts, though hardly to be described as model dwellings, are larger, built of stone or sticks, lined and covered with *chika* (dried mud) and thatched with grass.

The first night's rest on the journey is at Dire Dawa (reached nominally at between five and six o'clock), which in many ways is far ahead of Addis Ababa and indeed is the most advanced little town in Abyssinia, rejoicing in roads, a water-supply, and electric light. The hotel is quite comfortable, and its garden is perfectly lovely, a mass of orange-trees on which there was in December both blossom and fruit, scenting the whole place deliciously; great clusters of bougainvillea and other bright-coloured flowering creepers delighted the eye, and the flowerbeds were a brilliant sight. From a more material point of view, a real bath and an excellent dinner were items not to be despised.

The scene at Dire Dawa station is always full of interest,

and on the last occasion when we went up it was rendered still more so by the fact that the Governor of Harar was going up to Addis on the same train (he is technically the Sub-Governor, for Harar province is part of the Regent's own governorship). Preceded and followed by immense numbers of soldiers and attendants, this dignitary arrived at the station some few minutes before the train was due to start, his sword and shield carried in violet and gold brocade bags and his rifle in a crimson velvet bag. The crowd opened out for the party to reach the train, and what a crowd it was—Abyssinians in their white robes ; Somalis with bright-coloured checked and striped bits of stuff wound round them like a petticoat, and a filthy vest or shirt or piece of cloth above ; Danakil with their fuzzy heads dripping with grease, carved pieces of wood like two- or three-pronged forks, or skewers, stuck in their hair, filthy rags around them, a knife in their waist-belt, and a long spear in their hand ; Arabs with messy turbans and questionable loin-cloths ; Indians in their little square caps and white frock-coats, grasping the inevitable umbrella ; Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, and other so-called Europeans, and just half a dozen Frenchmen, officials of the railway mainly—a veritable Tower of Babel sort of assembly, mostly, seemingly, bent on out-yelling their neighbours.

On this occasion, owing to the presence of the Governor, proceedings were further enlivened by the fact that litigants were awaiting the train at some of the wayside stations, and when it came in they stood opposite the Governor's carriage, and, with a wealth of gesture and shouting, stated their cases. Then judgment was given, while the engine whistle shrieked again and again to urge a start, and the successful litigant beamed and bowed his thanks, while the other one stalked sullenly away.

Soon after leaving Dire Dawa another incident, of an unrehearsed variety, provided us with a certain amount of amusement, though it delayed us for a further hour. An axle of the Governor's carriage heated and set the

packing-box on fire ; the train was stopped and a bright fellow, reasoning that lack of grease had probably caused the fire, concluded that the proper thing to do to extinguish it was to pour oil on it. The result was disconcerting, and only then was it decided that water should be applied, after which the remains of the charred packing were pulled out and replaced by packing extracted from other axle boxes along the train.

The second day's journey comes to an end towards six o'clock at a rest-house on the Hawash River, which, although vastly less uncomfortable than it was when we first saw it about eight years ago, is hardly an abode of luxury. On the evening of the third day, with any luck, the train reaches Addis Ababa.

## CHAPTER II

### ABYSSINIA'S CAPITAL, AND SOME OF ITS RACES

THIS curious African town has changed in a remarkable manner during the last few years ; it is now in a transitionary stage, and exhibits the most striking anomalies and contrasts. The change became, of course, inevitable when the railway reached it in 1918, but until the Regent and some of the principal Chiefs had returned from their visit to Europe in 1924 progress was slow. Since then, however, things have moved rapidly in certain directions, although in others matters remain " as they were in the beginning."

The main impression made on the minds of the Abyssinians who toured Europe seems to have been a desire for motor-cars, and so, while three years ago the only cars in the place were one or two belonging to the Regent—which were hardly ever used owing to the absence of roads—now there must be at least a couple of hundred of various makes in Addis, of which, it may be mentioned incidentally, only one or two per cent. are British.

As they began to arrive it was realised that roads must be made for them to run on, and so roads were rapidly constructed in the town, and now on the few kilometres of comparatively smooth track available the newly imported Citroens and Fiats and Fords rush wildly about, to the manifest joy of the drivers and the equally manifest dismay of the horsemen, pedestrians, and herds of animals which always throng the city.

A desire for better housing has also induced the wealthier Abyssinians to construct for themselves stone houses roofed with corrugated iron, numbers of which have sprung into

being lately ; while many of the " upper classes " now wear boots as an adjunct to the picturesque native dress, which is still, fortunately, almost universal.

This dress, consisting of a long shirt worn outside a pair of trousers narrowing to the ankle, and surmounted by a *shamma* or toga—all made of cotton—is always white, except during periods of mourning, when pink, blue, or yellow are sometimes affected. Scriptural authority in the form of a verse from Ecclesiastes—" Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment "—is invoked for this, as also for the less pleasant practice of putting butter on their heads, a practice which when met with in a crowd on a warm day in an enclosed space is apt to cause unscriptural thoughts.

As a matter of fact, the real reasons for both these customs are quite different. Garments have always been white because they had no dyes, and butter is put on the head because oil or fat is useful on the skin as a protection from the sun in the Tropics.

But the veneer of civilisation has not as yet spread very far or penetrated very deeply. Murderers are executed in a little hut in the town, wherein they are tied to a post, rifles are trained on them through tubes fixed in the walls, and at a given signal the triggers are pulled by the relatives of the murdered man. This is an advance on the system in force a year or two ago, when the murderer was held down in an open field and shot gradually by the members of the aggrieved clan. Some six years ago they were hanged on trees in the market-place, and I have seen half a dozen at a time suspended there for several days ; it is only twenty years ago that a man was stoned to death in the streets on a charge of blasphemy against the Church.

Banquets at which many thousands of soldiers and retainers, priests, and beggars (all the most worthless members of the community) are fed on immense quantities of raw meat are held regularly at the Palace. Though now Europeans are not admitted to the spectacle, my wife and I

were fortunate enough to be present at one of the largest, where some 18,000 men were thus fed in three relays.

Sufferers from leprosy, smallpox, and other filthy diseases beg for alms in the town, exhibiting revolting sores and stumps of legs and arms. I have seen one of these unfortunates, lacking hands and feet and part of his face, mounted on a donkey as miserable-looking as himself, chanting outside the huts of natives probably poorer than he until he literally blackmailed the wretched people into giving him a piastre or two to get rid of him.

There is no sanitation in the town, and hyenas and jackals come up from the river at night to help the pariah dogs to do the scavenging work.

The intermediate stages between the new and the old are no less interesting to observe. It has, for example, always been the practice of Abyssinians to be followed in all their outings, however short, by an armed party of soldiers or attendants or slaves, or a combination of all these. The size of the party varied necessarily according to the importance and wealth of the individual, ranging from many hundreds in the case of a great chief, to perhaps a single slave-boy carrying an obsolete rifle in the case of a humbler person. This year I saw an Abyssinian who had succumbed to the attractions of a bicycle, and had obviously just learned to ride it, pedalling along the road in his flowing robes, while behind him toiled and panted his perspiring escort on foot, obviously cursing the day when the devilish foreign invention had reached the land.

On another occasion I was riding across the road near the Regent's Palace when the guard stationed at the gates, seizing their rifles, indicated that the Prince approached. A motor-cyclist soldier in khaki sped along in front, followed closely by H.I.H. seated in a motor-car painted longitudinally in the three colours of Ethiopia—green, yellow, and red. Beside and behind the car galloped a wild-looking escort of Abyssinians in their native dress, armed with rifles, spears,



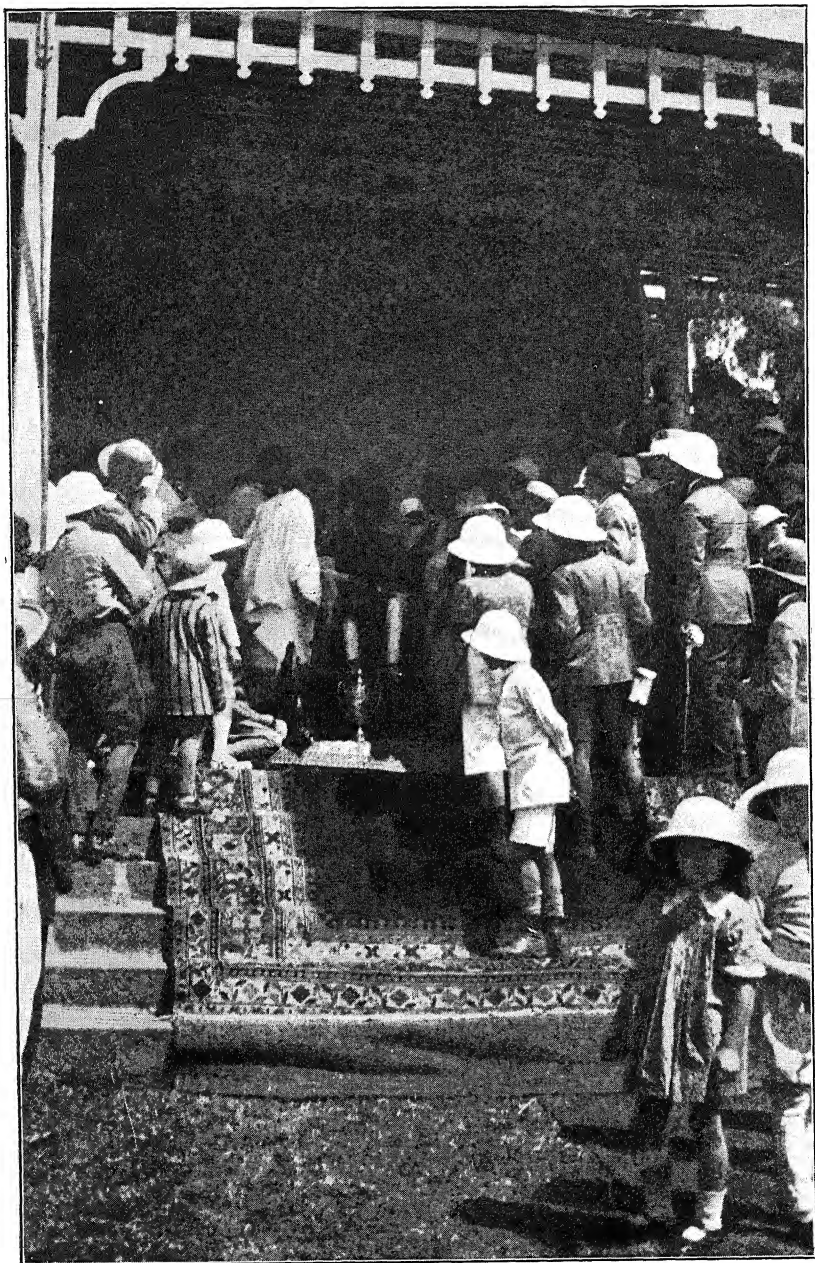
swords, or shields, and obviously enjoying their reckless dash through the town.

Another curious instance that presented itself was in connection with road-making. No doubt, as part of the survival of feudalism, it has always been the practice when any such work was undertaken for the Regent for him to set the example by himself placing the first stone on the road ; Chiefs and Ministers followed, and so on down through the hierarchy until thousands of individuals were to be seen toiling like ants along the whole stretch of road to be dealt with, while their feudal superiors watched the progress of the work from the nearest shady spot. On this occasion the familiar scene was in full progress, men carrying one small stone each, or a handful of earth on a leaf, most of them on foot, but some on mules, riding with a minute portion of soil in a cactus-leaf on their shoulder. And every morning for a week the Regent surveyed the work until the road was ready ; but—the modern touch—from his motor-car, while at the same time transacting business of State with his ministers and officials.

I have seen it stated that the practice was not so much a feudal survival as a method introduced by Menelik to induce his work-shy people to labour ; but I am very doubtful as to this, and there is evidence of the custom dating far back beyond this time.

Addis Ababa can actually boast of three weekly newspapers, two in Amharic and one in French. The story of the Amharic papers is peculiarly Abyssinian. The first of the two to be started was founded by the Emperor Menelik and is named *Aimero*, meaning *Conscience* ; it was dropped for some years and restarted, after Ras Tafari's visit to Europe, as a reactionary or opposition organ to the Regent's paper, *Birhanna Salam*, which means *Light and Peace* and which was founded in 1925.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that the last-named paper got into serious trouble recently owing to the publication of an article (apparently reproduced from a French



AT THE RACES AT ADDIS ABABA  
H.I.H. Ras Tafari distributing cups and prizes in 1927. In the foreground are Colonel  
Sandford's little daughters.



paper) attacking Italian Fascist and foreign policy. The Italian Government made vigorous protests on the subject, and the unfortunate editor was imprisoned for a month as a common malefactor and the offending number of the paper confiscated, the writer of the article was fined, and the school of which he was a teacher closed by order of the Government. This draconian severity hardly seems calculated to encourage freedom of the newly born Abyssinian Press.

Ras Tafari's newspaper is printed by a press imported from Germany and erected by himself in his own grounds some years ago, and is worked entirely by Abyssinians under the direction of an Abyssinian with the poetical name of Ato Gabra Kristos Takla Haymanot, about thirty men being employed. In addition to printing the newspaper, a number of books have also been issued from this press, these being bound on the premises by plant imported from England and also worked by Abyssinians. There is a separate little studio for lithographic and photographic work for reproducing the necessary illustrations. It is a remarkable achievement on the part of the Regent, and one due entirely to his own initiative.

The French paper, the *Courrier d'Ethiopie* is a useful and informative little production, ably edited by a Frenchman long resident in the country, Monsieur de Robillard by name. It very wisely eschews politics, a dangerous subject in Abyssinia, and confines itself to matters of commercial and general interest.

The Regent's efforts in the direction of education have also met with much difficulty. There was a Government school founded by the Emperor Menelik (the only one in the country), but it was entirely directed by Copts, and could certainly not be regarded as successful. So the Regent erected another school at his own expense, for which he proposed to import European teachers, and ultimately did so. But all the reactionary elements, aided and abetted by the supporters of the old Coptic school, joined together in opposing the project, alleging *inter alia* that the children

would be forced to abandon their national religion and become Catholics or Protestants, and the Regent was unable to open his school for two years—that is to say, until 1926. He succeeded at last, and when I visited the place this year I found that a remarkable development had taken place in the preceding twelve months. Two large, airy, well-ventilated buildings had been opened, one consisting of class-rooms and offices, and the other of dormitories and living-rooms. They were surrounded by large grounds commanding a glorious view over the mountains, and gardens were being laid out, while enlargements and extensions of the buildings were already in contemplation.

Over 180 children of all ages were receiving instruction, about 80 of whom were boarders ; and if cheapness could ensure popularity, surely they ought to be the most popular schools in the world. For the fee for tuition, board, lodging and washing was 9 dollars (about 18s. at the then rate of exchange) per month for the sons of chiefs and the wealthier people, whilst the poorer ones paid nothing—in other words, were taken in at the Regent's expense.

Two French teachers were in charge, and they told me that the subjects the children were really keen on were languages, English and French ; they learned these with amazing rapidity, especially the younger ones, some of whom in two or three months had learned to read aloud in these tongues. The average child would, I was told, learn as much in two years as an ordinary European child would in three. They were also learning history, geography, and arithmetic, and trying football, about which I am bound to say they seemed to have confused ideas. Unfortunately, they would take no interest in gardening or crafts, which seemed a great pity. But they had actually been taught to sleep in beds between sheets, and to keep their beds and dormitories clean and tidy—an astonishing result in so short a time, when it is remembered that it is an almost universal custom for them to sleep on the floor rolled up in their day-clothes.

I make no excuse for treating of this school at some length, for it is the first real educational effort by the Abyssinians, and if it succeeds and extends may affect profoundly the future of the country. It is of course for this reason that it was opposed by the reactionary elements.

It must, however, be borne in mind that the efforts at progress and advancement which have been described above refer solely to Addis Ababa, between which town and the rest of the country a very clear distinction must be drawn—between the barbaric customs of the many and the modern manners of the few.

Outside Addis Ababa little has changed, things are much as they always have been, and one can see primitive life at its best and most interesting—the Abyssinian people, or rather the peoples of Abyssinia, in their pristine condition.

The Abyssinians of to-day are like the inhabitants of most of the countries of the world, of mixed origin, and it is extremely difficult to determine with any certainty whence they came and who they are.

They describe themselves as Ethiopians, which ethnologically is certainly incorrect, for if the term Ethiopia means anything it must cover Nubia and the Sudan, which are not, and probably never were, part of Abyssinia as we know it.

The most probable theory is that the original inhabitants of Abyssinia were Cushite tribes of the Hamitic family, akin to the Egyptians, and also some related Semitic tribes. These settlers conquered and displaced outlying negroid tribes, with whom they no doubt intermarried and by whom they were probably to some extent racially influenced. But they were far more affected by the advent of the Sabaeans, a Semitic race coming from Arabia Felix, of which the principal tribes were known as Habersat, derived from Habesh, which term has very probably given to the country the generic name Abyssinia which it enjoys to-day.

Further Semitic influence was imported by the advent of a considerable Hebraic influx at the time of Solomon, whilst

later on the conquest of neighbouring negro and negroid tribes and the invasion of the Gallas caused yet more racial admixture.

But, diluted as their blood may be, the Abyssinians remain a separate and dominant race in Abyssinia, though it is probable that the true Abyssinians—who inhabit the provinces of Amhara, Tigre, Gojam, and part of Shoa—form but a small minority of the total population, certainly not more than a third and probably very much less; indeed, one estimate given me by a European who knows the country exceptionally well puts the proportion of Abyssinians as low as one in six of the total number of inhabitants.

The original and ecclesiastical language is Gîz, which is used only by the priests in church services. The official language is Amharic, but with the exception of Government officials and a certain (limited) number of officers and chiefs hardly anyone can read or write it.

On the other hand, sixty per cent. of Abyssinian children are taught the psalms of David and the ordinary prayers by the priests orally in Gîz, so that one can see in church services the congregation murmuring their prayers in Gîz, though scarcely one of them knows what he is saying.

Ras Tafari, a supporter of reform in this as in other matters, has given directions for the translation and printing of the scriptures and prayer books into Amharic, so that the people should at least understand the meaning of the various prayers they recite.

In addition to Gîz and Amharic, and, of course, Galla, one finds in the north the Tigrîña, Lasta, and Damot (Gojam) languages; in the west the Benishangul, Anuak, Tehisana, and Kaffa tongues; in the south the Konso, Jam-Jam, Walamo, Sidamo, and Gurage languages; and in the east the Somali, Dankali, Argeta, and Harari tongues. In addition to these many others are spoken throughout the length and breadth of Abyssinia.

It has been suggested by a recent writer on the country that the different tongues spoken in Abyssinia amount to

no less than seventy, and some idea of this may have been in Dr. Johnson's mind when he made Nekayah, the sister of Rasselas, apostrophise the Nile in the following terms : " Answer, great Father of Waters, thou that rollest thy floods through eighty nations, to the invocations of the daughter of thy native King."

By far the largest proportion of the population are Galla, who are dealt with in a separate chapter. The western frontier is fringed with a people of negro and negroid race, many different tribes described by the Abyssinians generally as Shankalla ; while on the north-east the Danakil and the south-east the Somali form the outlying populations. The Danakil are described by the Galla as Afars, and by the Somali as Adals.

Isolated groups of ethnologically separate types are found here and there in the midst of other races. Such, for example, are the Agaws of Gojam and Lasta ; the Falasha, a Jewish people living in the high mountains of Simien ; the Gurage, another small race speaking a tongue of their own in the midst of Galla country south-west of Shoa ; and the few Harari to be found in and around the town of Harar in the province of that name.

It is possible that some further light may be thrown on the Abyssinian genealogical tree as a result of the examination by experts of the information collected by Father Azais, a French Capuchin who has been conducting archaeological researches in Southern Abyssinia between 1922 and 1926.

South-east of Harar, towards the Ogaden country, he has discovered a number of dolmens, over sixty in all, in one of which were found, in addition to human remains, fragments of pottery and of silver work.

Farther west along the Rift Valley, near Lake Zwai in the Soddo and Gurage country, some thirty carved stones and small menhirs were met with, whilst in Sidamo Father Azais found over 1,200 very large phallic menhirs, running up to over six metres in height.



On many of the stones were carved emblems of the phallic worship and of the rising sun, and hieroglyphic and pre-hieroglyphic writing, some of which is quite unknown, and has not yet been deciphered.

All this is very interesting, the more so as it had generally been supposed—on what grounds I do not know—that nothing of the kind was to be found in central or southern Abyssinia, or indeed anywhere save in the north at Axum.

From his finds Father Azais has deduced a migration of people through Somaliland along the course of the Great Rift Valley, past the chain of Lakes, and on into the Congo.

I hesitate to follow him in this hypothesis, and still less in his further assumption that the similarity of the dolmens discovered by him with those in Northern Africa and France argues a further extension of this migration, which he places before the period of the well-known migrations from Arabia into East Africa. On this basis the similarity of the phallic stones he discovered to those found in Yucatan might justify a still more wonderful theory of migration !

But it is quite possible that further research may establish the existence of a very much older people and civilisation in Abyssinia than anything we yet know of.

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## CHAPTER III

### THE GALLA, THE MOST NUMEROUS RACE IN ABYSSINIA

IN writing of the Galla races of Abyssinia, I am afraid I shall have to adopt a somewhat different view to that occasionally put forward by recent writers on and travellers in the country. They appear to regard the Galla as a miserable, down-trodden race, the original inhabitants of a country which has been wrested from them by a ruthless invader, possessed of all the virtues and none of the vices, and generally a shining contrast to their overlords, the much-abused Abyssinians.

Unfortunately this representation is not altogether supported by the facts of history. It is perfectly true that the Galla have within the last twenty-five years been conquered and brought into subjection, and that in some parts of the country they are pretty badly treated to-day. But it must be borne in mind that they are, and have been for nearly four hundred years, invaders on a strange soil. They not only seized the opportunity of the Muslim invasion, early in the sixteenth century, to pour into an enfeebled and semi-devastated land, but they have therein maintained a ceaseless warfare from then until quite recently with Christian and Muslim alike, caused immense damage to the country, burned and pillaged churches and monasteries, and destroyed priceless records in the way of old manuscripts and works of art. Their methods of warfare were cruel even for that age, and it was they who introduced the horrible practice of mutilating the dead, and even the wounded and prisoners.

Bruce, indeed, says that the Galla nation, "the most cruel that has ever appeared in any country, has contributed more to weakening and reducing the Abyssinian Empire

than all their civil wars and all the foreign enemies put together." Tellez calls them "the scourge that God has made use of against the Abyssinians"; and, to come to more recent times, Markham states that the invasion of the Galla tribes "has had the effect of checking national progress to this day, and of throwing back a once-civilised people more and more into barbarism and anarchy." Incidentally he stigmatises the Azebu Galla as "a cruel set of blood-thirsty robbers," and condemns the other Galla met with farther south almost as harshly. And Wylde says that until 1900 the Hawash Valley was most unsafe owing to the prevalence of the raids of the Arussi Galla, whom he describes, with the Masai, "as the two most warlike and savage tribes north of the equator in the eastern part of Africa."

The Yedgau Galla, indeed, provided the ruling dynasty of Abyssinia for sixty years, i.e. from 1794 (when Ras Guksa seized the supreme power) to 1854, when his grandson, Ras Ali, was overthrown by Theodore. Ras Ali and Ras Guksa were the descendants of a Galla chief, Guangol by name, who, if Bruce's description may be relied on, appears to have been about as unpleasant a person to be near as one could well imagine. He is thus described:

"Guangol, chief of the Galla of Angot, came to pay his respects to the King. . . . He was a little thin cross-legged man of no apparent strength or swiftness as far as could be conjectured, his legs and thighs being thin and small for his body, and his head large. He was of a yellow unwholesome colour, not black nor brown; he had long hair plaited and interwoven with the bowels of oxen, and so knotted and twisted together as to render it impossible to distinguish the hair from the bowels, which hung down in long strings, the most extraordinary ringlets I have ever seen. He had likewise a wreath of guts hung about his neck, and several rounds of the same about his middle, which served as a girdle, below which was a short cotton cloth dipped in butter, and all his body was wet and running down with the same; he seemed to be about fifty years of age, with a confident

and insolent superiority painted on his face. He was mounted on a cow, upon which he leaned exceedingly backwards, pushing his belly forwards, and, the day being very hot, an insufferable stench of carrion soon made everyone in the tent sensible of the approach of this nasty sovereign even before they saw him."

I do not wish to suggest that the Galla exhibit these traits generally, or even to any appreciable extent to-day; from the descriptions that I shall presently give I am sure I shall be acquitted of any such intention. Indeed, one of the best men I met in Abyssinia was a Galla—intelligent, loyal, hard-working, honest to a fault, and capable of turning his hand to anything, from driving a team of sixteen horses to running a dynamo. He was equally at home in managing our household or looking after our *safari* on trek, and we shall always regard Milko Guyo more as a friend than anything else.

But I mention the facts I have given above in order that the lamb-like pictures which have been presented of these folk since their subjection by the Abyssinians may be taken at their proper value, and that it may be understood why the Abyssinians have been somewhat harsh in dealing with their centuries-old enemies when their turn came.

Like most matters pertaining to Abyssinia, the origin of the great Galla race has been the object of keen controversy among writers and travellers, and even to-day it is by no means certain that their ultimate origin can be fixed very definitely.

Even the meaning of their name is obscure. Tellez says Galla means milk, Bruce says shepherd, Basset gives emigrants, and another writer derives it from *qual la*, i.e. "he said no," given them in derision by the followers of Grañ on account of their answer when invited to embrace the Muslim faith.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that they do not call themselves Galla at all, but Ilmormo, or Sons of Orma.

The Abyssinian tradition, which, needless to say, is somewhat biased against them, denies their being a separate

race at all ; according to this, they sprang from the union of a disgraced and exiled Abyssinian princess who was given in marriage to a slave from the south of Gurage, by whom she had seven sons. These sons became great robbers, and each founded one of the seven divisions of the Galla race, all of which lived by robbery and pillage.

Indeed, the old chronicler is rather apologetic about writing the history of such a debased people at all, and asks plaintively in his preface : " If anyone says of me why has he written the history of the wicked just as one writes the history of the good ?—I shall answer : search your books and you will find that history has been written even about Muhammad and the Muslim kings, who are the enemies of our faith, and even about the puerile legends of the Persians."

I am afraid, however, that it is more probable that we must assign another origin to the Gallas, less romantic, perhaps, though more ancient. Bruce says that, according to their own traditions, they lived beyond the borders of the southern rains, within the southern tropic, and that they were carriers between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. When this occupation failed they moved northward, but, finding themselves involved in more or less perpetual rain near the equator, they pressed farther forward still until they reached Abyssinia.

So far as it goes, this view has been generally confirmed by late authorities, but it does not go back very far in the story. We know that they appeared on the southern borders of Abyssinia in 1542, coming from south-west of Lake Rudolph, probably from the neighbourhood of the Victoria Nyanza. One theory has it that they originated from farther south still, but the more probable theory is that they came from Southern Arabia, crossed the Gulf of Aden into British Somaliland, trended south into British East Africa (now Kenya), and settled there for a very long period.

Then we know that they burst northwards into Abyssinia, where they spread out fanwise in three main streams, occupying many of the districts devastated just previously by the Muslim invaders. To the west they extended as far

as Wallaga through Jimma, to the east through Arussi to Harar, and to the north-east to Wollo, a thin stream extending still farther being known as the Yedgau or Edjau Galla and the Azebu Galla.

It will thus be seen that the Galla surround Abyssinia proper on almost every side, and outnumber the Abyssinians in proportions which have been estimated at between three and six to one. As long as the Abyssinians had to fight them with similar weapons, the Galla practically held their own ; their conquest began from 1854 when Kings Theodore and John were able to acquire rifles and so to obtain the upper hand, but it was not until the advent of the Emperor Menelik that their conquest was finally completed, and to-day, though they are spread out over a large and fairly well-defined area, they can hardly be regarded as a nation so much as a congeries of related tribes.

Various travellers have indicated some sort of inter-tribal co-ordination, but this has been strenuously denied by others, and the evidence seems to point against any such conclusion. It is possible that such existed before the Galla invasion of Abyssinia ; but we know that domestic dissensions among them enabled the Abyssinians to keep them back from the mountainous heart of the country, and certainly to-day the different branches seem quite disconnected. They profess different religions, though the majority are pagan ; thus, broadly speaking, the Shoan and Wollo Galla are Christians, the Harar and Jimma Galla are Muslim, and the remainder, including the Arussi, Boran, and Wallaga are pagans, though the divisions are by no means clean cut, and even those who have become Christians retain to a considerable extent their pagan customs, such as sacrificing animals under a particular tree, and others.

They all, however, speak variations of the same proto-Semitic language, and, though the dialects in the various Galla districts may differ, one Galla understands another from north to south and east to west.

The Wollo Galla, probably the most homogeneous and

well-defined section of the race—whose erstwhile chieftain, Adara Bille, gave the missionary Krapf such a bad time—embraced the faith of Islam soon after their invasion of the country, and were later converted to Christianity by somewhat drastic methods which left them little alternative.

Prior to this the Wollo Galla were partially conquered by Theodore, who took with him to Magdala as a hostage one of the sons of Queen Workitu of the Galla. The boy who afterwards became the Emperor Menelik was also a hostage in Theodore's power at that time; he escaped and took refuge with Queen Workitu. The Queen was ordered by Theodore to surrender the fugitive, failing which her son would be put to death, but, to the credit of Workitu, she refused to give up Menelik, thus changing the whole history of Abyssinia. Her hostage son paid the penalty of death. Another of her sons, Muhamid Ali, waged war against Menelik, after the latter had become King of Shoa, for five years, but after many defeats became reconciled with the powerful Emperor, embraced Christianity, under the name of Ras Mikael, married a daughter of the Emperor Menelik, and became the father of Lej Yasu, the emperor dispossessed in 1916. He led the troops against the forces of Ras Tafari in that year, when he was heavily defeated near Addis Ababa.

To the south and south-west of Wollo come the Salale and Borana Galla, a race of horsemen. Around Addis Ababa are the Metcha, Jida, Jiru, and Ankober Galla and the Shoan Galla, inhabiting the highlands, cultivators and breeders of horses and mules.

The Shoan Galla are more civilised than the others, and, no doubt owing to being nearer to the capital, they have adopted the dress and habits as well as the religion of their conquerors.

Westwards again are three big Galla tribes, those of Jimma, Nekamti, and Wallaga.

On the east are the Itu, Argeta, and Karrayu Galla, all nomads, very rich in cattle, and inhabiting the lowlands north of the railway. These tribes are very bellicose and engage almost every year in hostilities with their neighbours



Shoan Galla on the banks of the Hawash River.



Shoan Galla children, near the Hawash River.





the Danakil; they maintain that if they do not indulge in these annual "Donnybrooks" their cattle will die. The fighting season is usually after the rains, when they have so much milk that they give it to their horses after gorging themselves to excess on it. Whether it is on account of the increased nourishment they then obtain, or whether, as they say, the milk they drink at that time has an exhilarating effect on them, the fact remains that it is at that period of the year that the inter-tribal troubles occur.

Both in the case of these people and of the Danakil, youths are not supposed to marry until they have killed a man, a lion, or an elephant.

Although the Galla generally are non-negroid in type, more regular of feature and lighter in colour than the Abyssinians, the physical types of the different tribes vary a good deal; thus, for example, there is reported to be a very marked difference between the women of the Western and those of the Eastern Galla. The former—e.g. the Leka Galla—are prettier and more graceful, lighter in colour, with small hands and feet, whereas the latter have large hands and feet, coarser hair, and are generally less attractive. I am bound to say that those we came across scarcely struck us as extreme types of beauty, but the difference to which I have drawn attention has been remarked on by several travellers.

The Arussi Galla are perhaps the purest race type of all the different branches. They claim descent from Arussi, one of the nine sons of the legendary Orma, the founder of the Galla according to their own tradition. The country in which they live is named Arussi. It extends from Lake Zwai and the high Arussi mountains eastwards along that geographical division of the country known as the Somali-land Plateau, bordering on the southern edge of the Great Rift Valley, the African section of which cuts right through Abyssinia.

North of Arussi lies the country of the Gille Galla, who were, I think, quite the dirtiest people I had ever come across, and who cordially reciprocated our feelings of

aversion. They were in a state of more or less constant peevishness with their neighbours the Arussi, and showed us with much pride many little heaps of stones marking the newly formed graves of those who had fallen in their inter-tribal discussions.

Another interesting branch of the Galla we came across farther south were the hippopotamus eaters. These folk were quite a distinct branch, looked down on with contempt and disgust by the others, and seemingly of a lower type. It is interesting to compare in this connection the remarks of Dr. Krapf, Mr. Rassam, and Mr. Hayes in their books written respectively in 1843, 1869, and 1905 regarding these people and their connection with a similar sect dwelling near Lake Tana.

Dr. Krapf says: "The Watos are Galla, dwelling in the neighbourhood of the Hawash. They say that they alone are pure Gallas, and therefore they do not marry the others. They are particularly fond of the flesh of the hippopotamus, which they kill in great numbers in the Hawash, and in this respect they resemble the Waitos in Amhara."

Mr. Rassam refers to the hippo-eaters near Lake Tana as Waitos and says: "I was unable to obtain any satisfactory account of the origin of this peculiar people. It is just possible, however, that there may be some relationship between them and the Watos, a tribe of Galla inhabiting the banks of the Hawash south of Shoa, who are also said to live on the flesh of the hippopotamus."

Mr. Hayes came across the Waitos when exploring Lake Tana in 1903, and refers to them as a curious people only found in that district.

Certainly the people we met did feed on hippo-flesh, but I am unable to say what connection, if any, there may be between them and their Muslim prototypes in the north—the people we met were pagans.

The Arussi Galla are most interesting people, and, as I have already said, of quite a fine type. The chief of one district we traversed was a little diffident of coming near

us at first, but later on became quite helpful, and even allowed some of his womenfolk to be photographed. His clothing, though adequate, was rather too strongly reminiscent of some of the attributes of Guangol to be pleasant, for when new (obviously a long while ago) it had been soaked in melted butter, and had never been washed since.

The garments of the ladies of his tribe were in some respects preferable, consisting of a couple of roughly tanned goatskins, and large quantities of bracelets, rings, and necklaces. Though most of them fought rather shy of the camera, we managed to get some good pictures.

Unlike the Abyssinian women, they have to work very hard, one of their most arduous tasks being carrying water for very considerable distances in the goatskins which they have to take to the nearest water-hole to fill.

The men are occupied either in cultivation in Upper Arussi—we passed through huge areas under crops—or in Lower Arassi where they are nomads, in tending their enormous herds of cattle. Their flocks of goats are large, and those we met with seemed in unusually good condition. They feed on acacia-trees, and it is interesting to watch the herdsman, armed with long, hooked sticks fifteen or twenty feet in length, pulling down the acacia-branches and knocking off the pods for the goats to eat. Sometimes the goats will stand on their hind legs, resting their fore legs on the branches, and so pulling them down that they can browse on the young foliage; they look very human when in this attitude.

Some of the people of this district indulge in fishing, in craft which would not be registered *AR* at Lloyd's, being made of reeds lashed together in the same way as has been practised for very many centuries, and which seems to answer their purpose quite as well as anything we could devise.

They were rather wild in some places, and not at all friendly in the way of giving us supplies. We had occasionally great difficulty in persuading them to let us have what we wanted, and in some districts we were quite unsuccessful in

getting anything at all, and had to rely entirely on our guns. Some of their habits, too, left much to be desired; for example, a savage tearing with teeth and fingers at the raw entrails of a recently killed ox is not a particularly entrancing sight.

On the other hand, many were very friendly, and the children were nearly always very jolly little persons, who could generally be tempted into camp by the display of treasures in the eating line, such as biscuits.

The form of religion or belief or worship of the pagan Galla is interesting although somewhat obscure, possibly because it has in the passage of time become varied in the different districts in which they have settled. It has some quite good points, and I am not sure that they ought to be called pagans.

There is, for example, some confusion of thought as to whether they worship a tree or not. I do not personally think they do, and I think the idea may be due to the fact that in many districts they sacrifice *under* a particular sort of tree, a kind of sycamore, one of which, for example, is known as Woda Nabi on the Hawash. But I do not think—though I write with all reserve—that they sacrifice *to* the tree.

They believe in a form of supreme deity—referred to as Wake or Wak or Wain, who, however, is not clearly distinguishable from the sky. He is invisible and possessed of many fine qualities. This deity has two others under him, a male known as Oglia and a female as Atete, though here again the relationship between the three, if any, is not clear.

There are no less than eighty-eight evil spirits, known as Saroch, divided into two parties of forty-four each, both of which appear to be equally bad and equally intent on inflicting sickness and other evils on suffering mankind. They can only be appeased by smoking, singing, dancing, or sometimes sacrificing a hen, preferably a red one.

They practise divination from the entrails of goats and sheep, and sometimes from cows. They plant aloes above their graves, and as soon as these flower the spirit or soul

is supposed to have gone to Wake, a pretty idea, and interesting as showing a kind of belief in the soul, which they think was given them by Wake, after he had originally created them out of mud.

South of Arussi are the Ania, Liban, and Boran Galla, nomads all, inhabiting the great extent of country from Liban westwards right up to Lake Rudolph.

The Boran (divided into two sections, the Sabbu and the Gonna) are perhaps the most interesting pagan tribes of South Abyssinia; they used to be a fighting race until their subjugation by Menelik, but now they are peaceful enough tending their enormous herds of cattle and horses, and heavily taxed by their Abyssinian overlords.

They are polygamists, and observe (or used until recently to observe) the horrible practice of throwing to the hyenas all children born of parents under thirty years old, thirty being the age at which circumcision takes place—a practice inculcated by their chief “kalu” or priest in virtue of an instruction received from the Wak Guraza (black god) in a dream.

When this “kalu” was born a snake is said to have been present at the birth, and to this they attribute the origin of the snake worship in which they indulge, a worship which includes many strange rites, into which limitations of space prevent my entering. The subject of Galla legend, superstition, and tradition is indeed one that would need a volume to itself.

What the future status of the now subject great Galla race will be it is hard to say. They are at present easy to keep in subjection owing to the fact that the Abyssinians are armed with rifles, whereas the Galla are not allowed to possess any. But the state of serfdom which many of the tribes suffer cannot presumably be maintained for very much longer, and, as the Galla are numerically so infinitely superior to the Abyssinians, the problem of dealing with them in the future may not be an easy one.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN THE ABYSSINIAN PROVINCES

APART from the fact that the Emperor Menelik abolished hereditary territorial governorships as far as possible, the provincial organisation is essentially feudal in character.

For administrative purposes the country is divided into a large number of governorships and sub-governorships, to which the holders are appointed by the sovereign and in which they remain at his pleasure ; literally so, indeed, for they are frequently changed as often as every year or two. The more important are about twenty in number, and it may be of interest here to give some details concerning them. First in importance from every point of view comes :

*I. Harar, Ogaden, Wollo, Dankali, Lower Arussi, and Bali.*  
—*Ras Tafari.*

The dominions of the Regent form a kingdom in themselves, and the political importance of the situation of these provinces may readily be appreciated from a glance at the map ; they cover a large part of the eastern and south-eastern frontiers of Abyssinia, bordering on Italian Eritrea, and French, British, and Italian Somaliland—a distance not far short of 1,000 miles.

The province of Harar alone, one of the richest and most fertile in the country, is larger than England ; it contains the second largest town in Abyssinia, that of Dire Dawa, of which a description has been given in the preceding chapters. The town of Harar, some thirty-five miles from Dire Dawa, is also a city of some size and trading importance, and is the caravan centre of the province ; it is one hundred and eighty miles from Zeila and two hundred and twenty

miles from Berbera, the two ports of British Somaliland. The railway runs through the northern portion of the district, which is administered for the Regent by his relative, Dajazmach Imeru, as Deputy-Governor, a cultured and pleasant type of Abyssinian, who is deservedly popular in the province.

Harar has been described as "a bone dropped by England while she was growling at France, and picked up from under their noses by Abyssinia." This is not an unapt description of the story of this district during the years 1874-86; for the first ten years of this period it was held by the Egyptians, and then abandoned by us in their name, whilst we at the same time made an arrangement with the French mutually agreeing not to acquire it. The native sultan then declared his independence, and in 1886 King Menelik utterly defeated this potentate and re-annexed the province to Abyssinia.

Wollo, which is populated by Galla, has only recently been assigned to Ras Tafari, or, more correctly speaking, to his infant son; it was taken away from the previous holder as this individual declined or was unable to carry out the anti-slave-trading policy of the Regent. But, strange to say, although he was removed from his governorship, he was given another and a very important province to rule in a different part of the country, where he met with precisely similar problems and was again removed. Prior to this, Wollo was, as has been stated, ruled by the late Ras Mikael, the father of Lej Yasu, the ex-Emperor of Abyssinia, and it is curious that his province should now have come into the nominal possession of his grandson, for Ras Mikael's daughter is Ras Tafari's very charming wife.

Ogaden is a barren country populated by Somals of a wild and turbulent character, and is one of the parts of Abyssinia into which foreigners are not encouraged to penetrate very far: much the same might be said of the Dankali country. But Arussi is a beautiful district,



mountainous and well-wooded, which will doubtless in time become exceedingly prosperous.

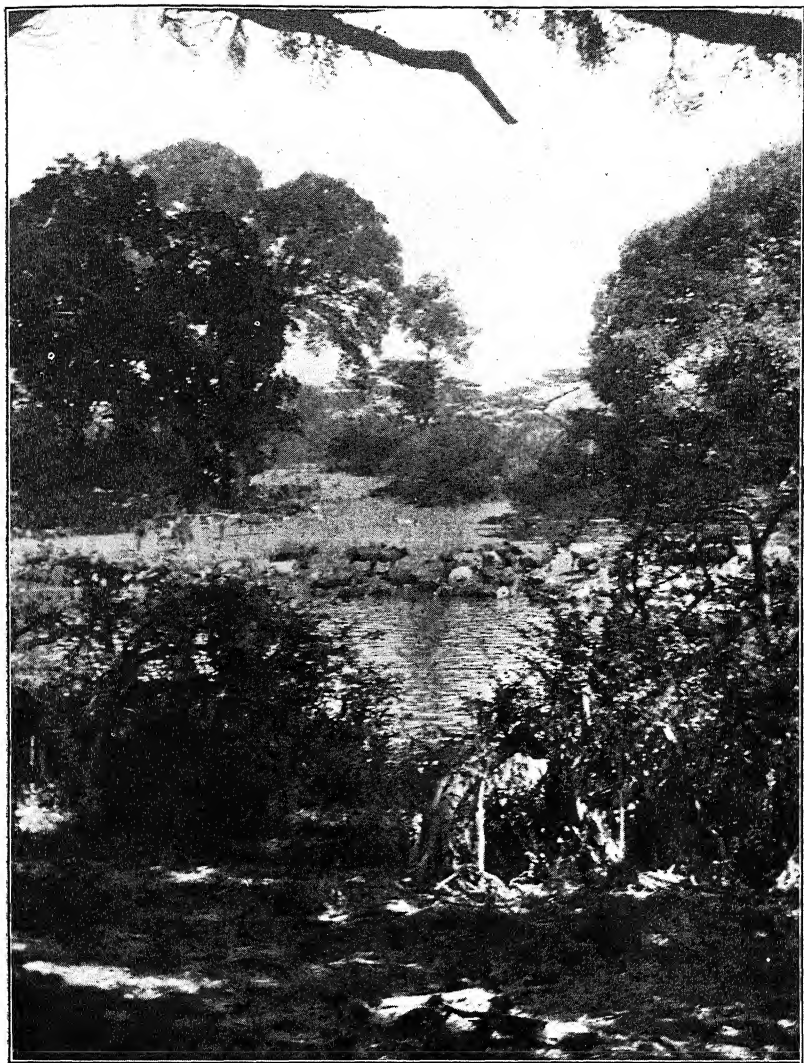
The next most important division is probably :

2. *Boran, Liban, Upper Arussi, Gurage, and the Galla Provinces West of Addis Ababa.*

This immense tract of territory, lying mainly in the south and south-west of Abyssinia, formed the dominions of the late Fitawrari Habta Giorgis, and gives some indication of his power and wealth. The disposal of the governorships rendered vacant by his death is naturally a matter of keen rivalry and the cause of much intrigue ; they will probably be split up amongst a number of people, including possibly the Regent, and if Boran and Liban fall to his share it may confidently be hoped that there will be a diminution of frontier trouble.

Upper Arussi has in fact already been assigned to the stepfather of Ras Kassa, Dajazmach Wolde Sadik, who is the commander of the " Mahal Safari " or bodyguard of the Empress, a body of troops whose function it is to camp round the sovereign's tent in war-time.

Of these provinces the most interesting is probably Gurage, which adopted Christianity at an early date, albeit in a somewhat strange form, and was the home of curious rites and practices which persisted until comparatively recent times. The Gurage to-day are partly Christian and partly Muslim, but no pagans are to be found among them. It must formerly have been a very rich country, for, if we can believe the records, the annual tribute used to include " two golden lions, three golden lion cubs, golden fowls, 1,000 head of cattle, and many other articles." Since its conquest by Menelik in 1875, however, the district must have become very much poorer, for the inhabitants are now to be found in considerable numbers at Addis Ababa, where, clothed in sheepskins, they act as the *hamals* or carriers of the town. Their name has indeed become synonymous with labourer.



BETWEEN ARUSSI AND GURAGE

Looking across the Bulbul River south of Lake Zwai, a lovely spot where animals came down to water, monkeys filled the trees, and birds and butterflies abounded.



The foregoing, being the most important divisions of the country, have been taken first ; the remaining provinces are described in geographical sequence, although it happens that the first two of them are undoubtedly the most important.

3. *Salale, Dera, Marabeti, and Borana.—Ras Kassa.*

This is another large and fertile province, lying between the Capital and the Blue Nile, and inhabited by Galla ; its ruler is one of the most powerful personages in Abyssinia.

He is said to be able to put into the field between 60,000 and 70,000 Galla cavalry, and it was the arrival of these formidable troops that turned the scale at the battle of Sagale and ensured Ras Tafari's victory over the attacking troops of Lej Yasu and Ras Mikael outside Addis Ababa.

Since the death of the Fitawrari Habta Giorgis it is probable that Ras Kassa, who is a great grandson of King Sahala Sellassie, stands, with Ras Hailu of Gojam, next in influence to the Regent ; he is an enlightened man and has been on missions to Europe, although, unfortunately, he speaks no foreign language. His son, Dajazmach Wand Belai, accompanied Ras Tafari to Europe in 1924.

4. *Gojam, Ashifa, and the Country West of Lake Tana.—Ras Hailu.*

Later chapters of the present book describing our journey into Gojam deal fully with this wealthy province and its very able and powerful ruler.

5. *Northern Tigre (Agame, Tembien, and Shire, with Adowa and Axum).*

Tigre is historically one of the most interesting parts of Abyssinia ; it was the seat of the old Axumite kingdom which flourished some two thousand years ago. The town of Axum itself was for many centuries afterwards the capital of the Empire, where the kings have always been crowned until Menelik's accession. It is the oldest and most sacred place in the Empire, and by the principal church is a holy

enclosure where any Christian can find sanctuary. Wonderful old carved monoliths, some of them still standing, are to be seen there, the largest being some sixty feet high, and that some of them were used for sacrificial purposes is obvious from the carved altars at the base from which channels conveyed the blood of the victims. It is one of the very few places in Abyssinia where ancient ruins and carved inscriptions enable the archæologist to obtain some assistance in unravelling the obscure history of the country.

For obvious political reasons the old kingdom of Tigre has been split up among several governors; Northern Tigre was six years ago under the rule of Ras Seyum, grandson of King John of Abyssinia, but in 1921 this Ras was relieved of his post on the capture in that year of the fugitive Lej Yasu, ex-Emperor of Abyssinia, who had taken refuge in Tigre. Doubtless for reasons of policy the late Governor accompanied Ras Tafari to Europe in 1924, as did his successor in the governorship, Dajazmach Gabre Sellassie, who had studied in Italy and speaks Italian well. This latter chief has now in his turn been relieved of his post, and it is probable that Ras Seyum may be assigned part of the province of which he was formerly governor.

#### 6. *Southern Tigre (Macalle).—Ras Gugsa Aria.*

The present ruler of this portion of the old kingdom is a half-brother of Ras Seyum and has lately had part of the Axum and Adowa district added to his province.

#### 7. *Begamdir, Gondar, and part of Simien.—Ras Gugsa Wolli.*

This province is part of the old kingdom of Amhara, one of the ancient kingdoms of the Empire, of which Gondar was for a time the capital. It was a centre of Portuguese activity in the sixteenth century, and is noted *inter alia* for the ruins of the palaces and churches built by or as a result of Portuguese influence, which are described elsewhere in the present volume. Several writers have, quite incorrectly, derived the name of this country from *bag* (sheep) and *mdir*

(land), and described it as the "Land of Sheep." In point of fact, Begamdir really means "Land of the Bega," just as Agawmdir means the "Land of the Agaws."

The present governor is the husband of the Empress Zauditu.

8. *Waag (Sokota).—Waagshum Kabata.*

9. *Lasta.—Dajazmach Wand Belai (son of Ras Kassa).*

The special character and history of these two provinces have been dealt with elsewhere.

10. *Sidamo.—Dajazmach Balcha.*

Sidamo lies north of Liban and east of the chain of lakes running from Lake Zwai in the north to Lake Rudolf in the south. It is one of the principal coffee-growing districts of the country, though the quality of the berry is not as good as that produced in Jimma and Harar.

11. *Goffa and Bako.—Dajazmach Marid.*

This province lies between Sidamo and Kaffa, to the west of the chain of lakes referred to above.

12. *Kaffa, Magi, Woldaya, and Gera.—Betwadet Getachu.*

A most beautiful wooded district, though it has to a great extent been depopulated as a result of its conquest in 1847 by Menelik's armies, under Ras Woldo Giorgis, when the King of Kaffa was captured and nearly two-thirds of the population were killed or deported. It is from the Magi district that raids into Kenya have until recently been fairly frequent and a great source of trouble to the Kenya Government, and indeed to the Central Abyssinian Government also.

13. *Jimma.—Sultan Aba Jifar.*

Strange to say, the Muslim district of Jimma is one of the best-governed of the subject provinces of Abyssinia, and is commercially prosperous and industrious. It is one

of the Galla states founded nearly a century and a half ago; the population are Muslim Galla, and the ruler, Aba Jifar, is a Muslim, a descendant of a long line of rulers of Jimma, who owes the retention of his position to the fact that he offered no resistance to Menelik when that sovereign overran the Galla countries of the south-west. From all accounts, Aba Jifar, though he would allow no Christian church to be built, is a comparatively enlightened administrator, encouraging cultivation by taxing his people lightly, and in other ways. The otherwise "benevolent despotism" of his rule is, however, marred by that Muslim failing, encouragement or toleration of the slave-trade; Mandara, outside the walls of his capital, was a little while ago a centre of this abominable traffic.

14. *Gurra Farda and Gimirra*.—*Dajazmach Taye*.

The country of Gimirra was very fully and admirably described some time ago by the Swiss explorer George Montandon in his book *Au pays Ghimirra*, though in dealing with the rest of the country his information is rather out of date. He regards the inhabitants of Gimirra as a somewhat specialised race peculiar to that region, and defines them as a "non-Bantu Hamito-negroid" people. They have suffered much as a result of the subjugation of their country, which, in common with the rest of the south-western Galla highlands, is singularly beautiful and picturesque.

15. *Gore and Ilu Babor*.—*Ras Nado*.

Gore is a fertile province in the west, inhabited mainly by pagan Galla: it includes the Gambela post which is leased by treaty to the Sudan Government, and joins the Sudan at the town of Nasser. It is the theatre of much coffee cultivation, most of which goes into the Sudan by the trade route from Addis which passes through the province; from Gambela the route follows the River Baro, which, rising in Gore, joins the Sobat and flows into the White Nile a

little way south of Fashoda. This is one of the only navigable rivers in Abyssinia and is a trade highway for three months of the year—i.e. during the rains.

The Governor, Ras Nado, has been on several missions to Europe, and accompanied the Regent on his tour in 1924.

16. *Sayu*.—*Dajazmach Beru Wolde Gabriel*.

A prosperous district lying between Beni Shangul, Wollaga, and Gore.

17. *Wollaga*.—*Dajazmach Makonnen Demisso*.

A hilly and beautiful district in the west which is reputed to produce gold. A European Company has recently claimed to have discovered platinum there.

18. *Gudru*.—*Dajazmach Achamelli*.

Gudru is fully described in the chapters dealing with our passage through this very lovely country, as is also the province of

19. *Chellea*.—*Betwadet Wolde Gabriel*.

20. *Beni Shangul*.—*Sheik Hojali*.

This province is a low-lying and hot district on the northerly portion of the western frontier bordering on the Sudan. It is inhabited by pagan negroid tribes described by the Abyssinians as Shankalla, and is supposed to be rich in gold. It was subjugated in 1897 by Abyssinian armies under Ras Gobana and Ras Makonnen, the father of the present Regent.

21. *Wolkait and part of Simien*.—*Dajazmach Ayaleu*.

Wolkait is geographically and politically important owing to its situation in the north-west corner of Abyssinia between Lake Tana and the frontiers of Eritrea and the Sudan. It is obvious that, if any of the developments foreshadowed in the Anglo-Italian Agreement materialise, they must profoundly affect, or be affected by, this district.



The foregoing provinces are, as have been indicated, merely the more important. Each of them is divided into districts under sub-governors; each district into large groups of villages administered by a Shum-Gulti, and smaller groups under a Shum-Addi, each village being under the jurisdiction of a Chika-Shum.

As each official is supposed to take his directions only from his immediate superior, the time taken for an order to filter down from the Central Government through this hierarchy, and the difficulties incidental thereto, may well be imagined.

But though the administration of many of the provinces leaves much to be desired from nearly every point of view, the position is vastly different from what it was at Menelik's accession; then he found a number of practically independent kingdoms, and a still greater number of semi-independent provinces, governed in many cases by hereditary chiefs who obeyed no law but that of their own sweet wills. The changes wrought by Menelik were really wonderful—the more so that they remained when his strong hand was removed. And, though there was then an interval of disorder and unrest, the present rulers have re-commenced and carried on Menelik's work with marked success, so much so that in most parts of the country travel is quite safe for Europeans, even though it is attended with various difficulties owing to the many still-existing defects and shortcomings and the non-development of the country and its peoples.

## CHAPTER V

### PREPARATIONS FOR THE START

ON the occasion of a previous journey to Abyssinia my wife and I had been able to trek southwards along the line of lakes, beginning with Zwai and ending with Rudolph, which lie along the course of the Great Rift Valley.

Last year we decided to trek northwards towards the Blue Nile, to endeavour to reach it by a route that should be at all events partly new, to cross it at an unknown passage, and to travel onwards through the old kingdom of Gojam, which lies north of the river and which, formerly independent, now forms part of the Abyssinian Empire. We proposed to continue on northwards as far as time and other circumstances would allow, leaving the question of the return route to be decided by events.

The collection of suitable men and good animals for a trek in Abyssinia is by no means an easy matter ; there are no arrangements there such as make a similar job so simple in a British Colony, for example.

Fortunately, however, we had trekked there often before, and, knowing the ropes, the difficulties for us were minimised. We were able to get hold of a number of good men who had been out with us previously, and, as they brought their friends with them, we had a really good batch to select from. This is a very important point, for it makes all the difference in the world to one's comfort and even to the success of the trip if the *safari* consists of cheery and efficient fellows who are prepared to smile at difficulties and work like Trojans to overcome them.

They have an excellent system of "guarantors" for servants and followers in the country which, unlike many

things there, works admirably. Every man seeking engagement with a European brings of course with him the usual *chits* or *warakits*, as they term them, from his previous employers, which may or may not be of any value. In addition, however, he has to produce two real live Abyssinians as *wass* or guarantors for his good behaviour or service, and if he fails or steals or gets into trouble these two have to stand the racket. And, as a matter of fact, they always do ; it is almost unknown for a *wass* to endeavour to avoid his obligations ; I have seen the system actually applied many times, though I am glad to say we have never had occasion to do so ourselves, as none of our men have ever let us down.

The selection of the men and their allocation to their different jobs being settled, one has to make the necessary advances in cash and kind for the journey. Each man receives a month's wages in advance, and also a month's food money, a woollen blanket, a pair of sandals, and a mug. It is also usual to supply for every four men a cooking-pot, a water-bottle, and a round and slightly concave iron dish or pan for baking the large thin flat loaves of *teff* bread which is their staple diet. And this is the first place where the *wass* comes in ; if any of them disappear with their advances they are all recoverable from the guarantor.

The distribution of blankets was the occasion of much excitement. We had brought out a consignment of really good ones from Europe, but there were not quite enough of them, so we had to make up the number by local purchases. These were of course not as good as the others, and long and heated arguments ensued between our headman (to whom we left the distribution) and the others as to who was to come off best. Eventually they were all suited, and for the rest of the day strutted about proudly in the blazing sun with their new blankets wrapped round them sometimes toga-wise, sometimes over their heads.

There were for this trip twenty-three of them ; the caravan leader, the cook, cook's boy, two personal boys, two grooms,

ten *zabañas*, and last, but not least, the *nagadi*, or muleteer, with five men to help him.

Our caravan leader was a dignified person, always arrayed in spotless white garments (except after fording rivers !), who chose our camp sites with wonderful acumen, and whom we were compelled out of feelings of respect to christen "The Emperor." Of the cook I can only say that I never wish to go on *safari* without him ; not only was he an artist at his *métier*, but he was the most cheery soul imaginable, and no difficulty could erase the grin from his face, or stop his merry badinage with the other men. He was also a past-master at collecting wood for the kitchen fire in camps where no wood existed ; how he managed it we never knew and thought better not to ask. But though we might be shivering by our tent crouched over a fire of dung-cake, which gave out little but smoke and smell, yet a bright blaze would be going at the cook's tent, and a steaming and appetising meal would always be forthcoming.

Abyssinians make really excellent personal "boys" if properly trained, and ours were no exception to the rule ; those who have acted as "lady'smaid" to my wife have done their job remarkably well. Of course their zeal sometimes misleads them, as, for example, when on one occasion I discovered the "maid" meticulously brushing and folding up my wife's underclothes ; or when I came on him engaged in carefully combing out the clothes brush with her hair-comb.

Our chief syce, Damisse, who had been with us on trek before, was far above the ordinary Abyssinian as regards horse-lore, due no doubt to his Galla blood ; the average Abyssinian, though a good rider, is not a horseman, and is a shocking horse-master.

Of the others it is only necessary to mention at the moment the *nagadi*, a most efficient person who quarrelled with all European employers except ourselves, but who managed his men and mules admirably, and served us loyally and well. He possessed an uncanny acquisitive power as regards

supplies of raw meat for his men and barley for his mules, and, though he was not entitled to draw these supplies from us, he managed to do so with great success and complete absence of friction—he was most plausible.

The *nagadi* arrangements are simple and satisfactory: the traveller hires the *nagadi* and the requisite number of assistants and animals for the trip, paying a fixed price per mule per day, which includes the services of the men and mules and their feeding.

The figure we gave (others pay more I believe) was half a dollar a day when on the march, and a quarter of a dollar a day when in camp; this does not sound much, but as we had some twenty pack-mules (besides our own riding-mules and ponies) the figure mounts up when the days run into months.

All our camp equipment and saddlery, and the great bulk of our stores, we had of course brought out from England; but there are always a number of deficiencies to be made up, involving local purchase or manufacture, though it is always as well to reduce this to a minimum as far as Abyssinian trekking is concerned, for local resources are limited and expensive. It is therefore very desirable to foresee one's requirements as far as practicable before leaving Europe, and to provide oneself amply with the small luxuries which are so much more important on trek than necessities—tinned fruits and jams and milk make a welcome addition to the perpetual diet of meat and birds, which one can shoot in plenty, and eggs, which one can generally acquire in a state of comparative freshness.

The method of packing one's stores is a matter of considerable importance if one is to avoid delays in getting off in the morning and sore backs for the mules. The cases should be of the right size, shape, and weight—that is to say, oblong and not square—and capable of being loaded two, three, or four on a mule, according to weight (one or two on each side, or one on each side and one on the top); a mule-load in Abyssinia should not exceed 150 lbs., as a rule,



Men of our safari in the grounds of the Imperial Hotel before the start.



The caravan loading up for the start.



if one is to do a fairly long trek, though it is possible to load up to a maximum weight of 200 lbs. if the mule is exceptionally strong and pretty fresh. If donkeys are used it is inadvisable to load beyond 100 to 120 lbs. as a maximum.

A *safari* must be absolutely self-contained ; there are no rest-houses or anything of that sort to be met with, and the camp equipment must accordingly be a complete and comprehensive one. We have found that a double tent, with bath-room attachment, is sufficient for two persons, the outside fly being extended in front to serve as a verandah, and made extra long at the sides to act as a shelter against sun or rain for the luggage, which can be piled under it.

The nights are bitterly cold in the mountains, and as an additional protection against this, as also against water and the invasion of things that crawl, I have found it most helpful to have the ground-sheet sewn to the sides of the tent and slit up in the middle, where the two pieces should overlap about a foot. This, with about half a dozen blankets and a sleeping-bag, should ensure a good night's rest.

The usual complement of beds, tables, chairs, lamps, water-buckets, a length of stout rope for picketing the ponies at night, and for emergency use in crossing streams, etc., by day, is of course necessary.

Tents have also to be provided for the men, and for these they have a most simple and ingenious pattern, made in a single piece of double sheeting and supported by three bamboo poles (two uprights and a cross-piece), which answers the purpose admirably.

We bought the *abugedid* (unbleached cotton sheeting) and some needles and they made them themselves, a tent for four or five men requiring forty-five yards of sheeting ; and then came the dress rehearsal, when all the tents were pitched and the equipment put up against the watch, and afterwards all pulled down and made up into bundles for loading. Our record for putting up was seven minutes, which we improved later. This work is done by the *zabañas*, who are responsible for pitching and striking the



tents, making them up into packages, supplying the camp with wood and water, and keeping guard at night.

Then followed the usual heated arguments as to the weight and distribution of the loads, and the number of mules required for transport, the *nagadi* swearing that every load was too big, and that at least thirty mules were wanted, while the headman swore as volubly that he had never seen smaller loads, and that fifteen able-bodied mules were more than adequate.

We eventually compromised on twenty, after rejecting any that had signs of sore backs.

And now everything was ready except the elaborate sealed permits without which no one can travel outside the capital. Even these are not always efficacious, as the writ of the Central Government does not command that respect in the distant provinces that it should, and the underlings of far-off chiefs are apt to limit their obedience to their immediate overlords, as several expeditions, official and otherwise, have at times found to their cost. On one trip I remember a minor functionary was raising some objection to my passport as not containing a full enough description of the members and equipment of the party, and it was not until I pointed out to him that his objection possibly arose from the fact that he was trying to read it upside-down that he realised his desire for *baksheesh* had led him astray!

On the present occasion our passport was of course late in arriving, the application having been mislaid; but, thanks to the help of the Regent, this and other last-minute difficulties were overcome and we were at last ready for the road.

Before leaving, we had been most kindly received by the Empress, and, as usual, by the Regent, who, in addition to the usual facilities, had offered us riding-mules and other conveniences, and provided us with rifles for our *zabañas* and a supply of ammunition. We had experienced from the British Minister, Mr. Bentinck, that kindness and hospitality which are traditional with the British Legation, and had drawn

upon the inexhaustible supply of information of the Oriental Secretary, Mr. Zaphiro, whose knowledge of the people and the country is probably unique as the result of his long residence there and his intimate acquaintance with the customs and languages.

The weather, too, cleared up suddenly for our departure. Contrary to all precedent, it had been raining during November, but this climatic irregularity came to an end with a rainbow which our men hailed as a good omen. Incidentally it may be mentioned that the Abyssinian national colours of red, yellow, and green are said to be derived from those of the rainbow, as typifying the union of heaven and Ethiopia. Knowing their claim to divine association in the persons of their ruling house, I am a little surprised that they do not claim that the rainbow derives from the Abyssinian national colours.

They have another rather pretty superstition regarding the rainbow; they call it "Mary's girdle," because as she stooped down to look at the earth after it had been raining her *shamma* opened, and her girdle (always made of bright colours in Abyssinia) became visible. When there is a double rainbow, one large and one small, as is sometimes seen here, they call the smaller one "Christ's girdle."

Commonly speaking, the year is divided into two seasons, the dry weather lasting from the beginning of October to the middle of June, known as *Baga*, the Abyssinian summer, and the rainy season from mid-June to the end of September, known as *Kramt*, their winter.

The more erudite, however, introduce into *Baga* two other seasons, *Tsaday* or *Makar* (autumn), from the beginning of April to the beginning of July, the sowing season, and *Matsaw* or *Zidia* (spring), from the beginning of October to the beginning of January, the harvest period.

January and part of February is thus left as *Baga* proper, and between then and April there intervenes the period of little rains, sometimes described as *Balg*.

Very ancient laws are applicable to the rainy season of

*Kramt*, though I should be sorry to say that they are always strictly applied. For example, the legal period of this season, which certainly does not correspond to the facts of the case, is from 4th July to 15th September, and during this period no man or beast may cross fields of grain or standing crops; no master of a household may expel from his house any residents therein; no persons can be compelled to attend law cases if this involves travelling from a distance.

Quite apart from ancient laws or theories, however, the weather is a most important consideration when planning a trek, and in normal years it has always been pretty safe to rely on fine weather from the beginning of October until well on into February, whilst the actual rainfall between then and mid-June has not as a rule been a serious matter.

From the interesting table in the Appendix it will be seen that the average rainfall in Addis Ababa, taken over a period of twenty-five years, is about 1,200 millimetres, varying from 945 millimetres in 1902 and 1919 to 1,553 millimetres in 1906. The bulk of this is distributed over the months of June to September, when anything between 200 and 400 millimetres a month may be expected, but in some years the so-called "little rains" have provided a good deal of water in the early months of the year.

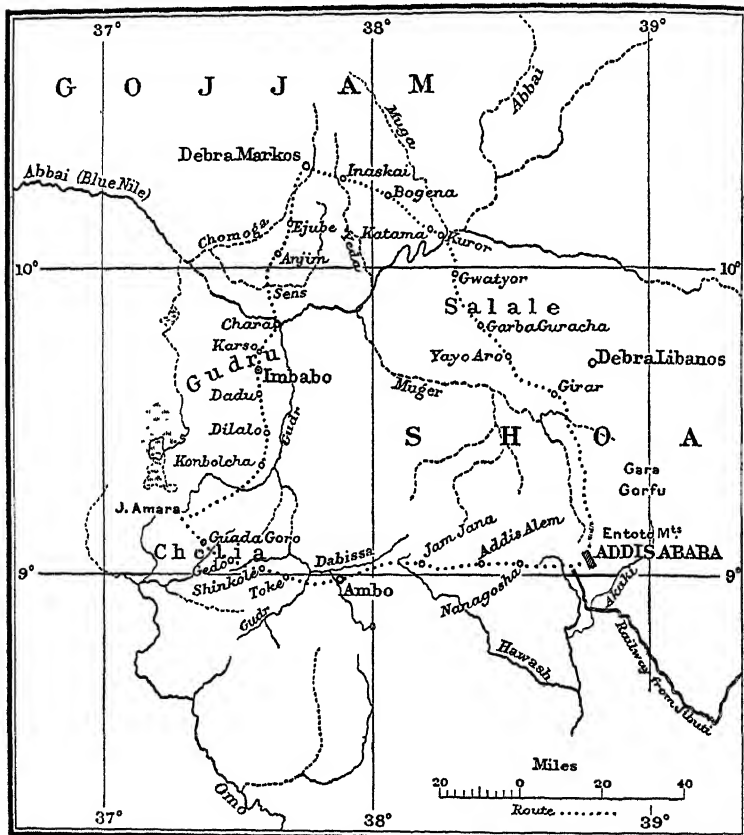
These were abnormal in 1926, extending from March right up to the big rains in June, which, in their turn, extended on into October and November; while in 1927, though there was no rain at all in January, there were tremendous deluges in May, which *inter alia* resulted in cutting the railway line and even in flooding out Jibuti.

It seems consequently no longer safe to rely on all the months from October to June as being suitable for trekking, a very important matter when planning lengthy journeys, for moving about in the rains in Abyssinia is no picnic. The leader of a recent expedition undertaken in the wet season through part of the country we traversed writes: "Thus ended the most miserable journey any of us had

experienced. The rain usually began to threaten about midday, generally culminating in a heavy shower in the early afternoon . . . a fine interval before sunset, when the rain came on again. . . . The rains or heavy dews left the tents completely sodden and added considerably to the weights of the loads. The early part of the daily route was often through wet vegetation, and on two or three occasions there was rain during the morning, which made travelling most uncomfortable and frequently penetrated the baggage, so that things had to be opened up and dried when opportunity offered. The mules suffered considerably from the muddiness of the steep paths and from difficulties in crossing streams with slippery banks. It can be concluded that journeys across Abyssinia during the rains should only be undertaken under circumstances of extreme necessity."

On one of our previous treks we had been caught unexpectedly by a heavy storm in an unsuitable place; a stream ran through our tent, bringing with it a rich deposit of slimy mud and a number of live things as well; our kit was soaked whilst unpacking; a cold and sodden meal of oddments plentifully mixed with mud and water was all we could get to eat; and in the morning we found our wretched ponies and mules immersed almost up to their bellies in liquid mud, from which we had quite a business to extricate them. We had no desire for much of that sort of thing, so it was with some relief that we welcomed the favourable climatic indications and heard the cheerful prophecies of our men as to the outlook.

MAP OF SHOA, GUDRU, GOJAM, AND SALALE.  
TO ILLUSTRATE THE JOURNEY OF THE AUTHOR AND HIS WIFE.



*Reproduced by permission of the Royal Geographical Society.*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE START

FOR those to whom the great open spaces of the world and the incidents of travel in the wilds appeal, there can be few more delightful experiences than trekking in Abyssinia. Once the hot, barren deserts of the surrounding frontiers are left behind, the traveller finds himself in warm yet bracing air amongst mountainous highlands, a series of great plateaux averaging from 4,000 to 8,000 feet above sea-level, seamed and torn by ravines and chasms in whose depths great rivers curl and twist, and dotted with mountains running up to nearly 15,000 feet.

Delightful as the surroundings are, however, there are factors which render trekking in this country far from easy at times. There are no roads, just tracks among the mountains and across the valleys, and at times even these are almost impassable, and occasionally disappear altogether.

As the Abyssinians love the mountains and hate the valleys, tracks such as there are almost invariably run along the mountain heights, and when these come to an end in the direction they are going, the track plunges straight down into the valley and up the opposite side, regardless of any question of slope or gradient, so as to leave the hated lowlands as quickly as possible, and get back on to high ground. The method may be direct, and is certainly picturesque; but it does not make matters easier for loaded pack-animals.

Bridges are few and far between, and such as there are are not calculated to inspire one with confidence, so that rivers must generally be forded or swum, and they may cross one's path thick and fast; on one day, for example, we crossed no less than eleven. In shallow water running over

a hard bottom this is quite pleasant, but with a swiftly-running, deep stream, or in places where the banks are boggy and the pack-animals stick girth-deep in the mud, one is apt to be somewhat anxious as to the fate of one's provisions, ammunition, and other gear. Again, few Abyssinians know their way about the country other than on the ordinary caravan tracks from market to market, and consequently for a longish trek it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get reliable guides.

It is, moreover, unwise to rely with any certainty on obtaining anything in the way of supplies en route for man or beast, for, though at times one may be inundated with hospitality, at others the tribes through whose territory one passes may be too shy or wild to bring supplies anywhere near camp. We have had experience of both these alternatives.

Such guides as one may secure are, as a rule, quite ignorant of distance, time, sometimes even of direction; if, for example, a guide is asked how far it is to the next watering-place, he will probably point to the sky and say that if you start when the sun is "there" and travel fast you will reach water when the sun is "over there," pointing vaguely to the horizon. And this difficulty is increased by the method of nomenclature adopted; in a Galla country, for example, a place will have two names—one Galla, one Amharic; and a district, a village, a river, and a mountain may all be named alike if they are somewhere near each other, so that steering by the name of a place may lead one into serious trouble.

Such difficulties, however, as these and others merely lend interest to a journey, and we were unfeignedly glad when the morning fixed for our departure dawned at last and we prepared ourselves for the scene of chaos and confusion that seems inseparable from the start of a caravan in Abyssinia.

Theoretically, there was nothing to be done but load up the mules and get off, but the reality was quite a different proposition. In the first place our carefully selected mules

had been eating and resting for a week owing to the postponement of our start, and consequently they were in excellent condition, so excellent indeed that they saw no reason for varying the last week's procedure, and evinced the strongest disinclination to be caught and loaded. When, after an infinite amount of racing about and yelling on the part of the men and squealing and kicking on that of the mules, loads began to get on they came off again with startling rapidity; if it took ten minutes for the men to adjust a load, it took the mule about half a minute to kick it off again; straps came unfastened, boxes crashed to the ground, bales came undone, and tempers became heated; two mules managed to shift their loads underneath their bellies, and, after galloping round the field in this condition and endeavouring to kick their loads to pieces, one pitched over on its head and turned a complete somersault. It was, however, none the worse, nor, *mirabile dictu*, was its load. We also watched with mild amusement the spectacle of an otherwise staid and sober *nagadi* hanging on to a kicking mule's head, banging it with a stick, and enquiring of it pathetically in a shrill voice, "Who is your father?"—a peculiarly apposite remark in the case of a mule, and, incidentally, the most violent form of Abyssinian curse—a spectacle which has to be seen to be appreciated.

The Abyssinian *nagadi* loads his mule in a manner quite *sui generis*. The two main packages (smaller ones are sometimes superimposed) are fastened together high up on the saddle so as to make the whole thing as narrow as possible, and then packages and saddle are lashed on to the mule by long hide ropes passed over them and round under the belly. The saddle has a crupper, but no girths, and consists merely of two long pads covered by a sheepskin attached to a piece of forked wood curved nearly to a right-angle which rests on the withers. The sores caused on the withers by this fork, on the belly by the hide ropes, and under the tail by the crupper are occasionally dreadful; but nothing will persuade these men to use any other kind of



saddle, and it is quite useless to bring out one's own pack-saddle, as the members of another expedition discovered while we were there this year.

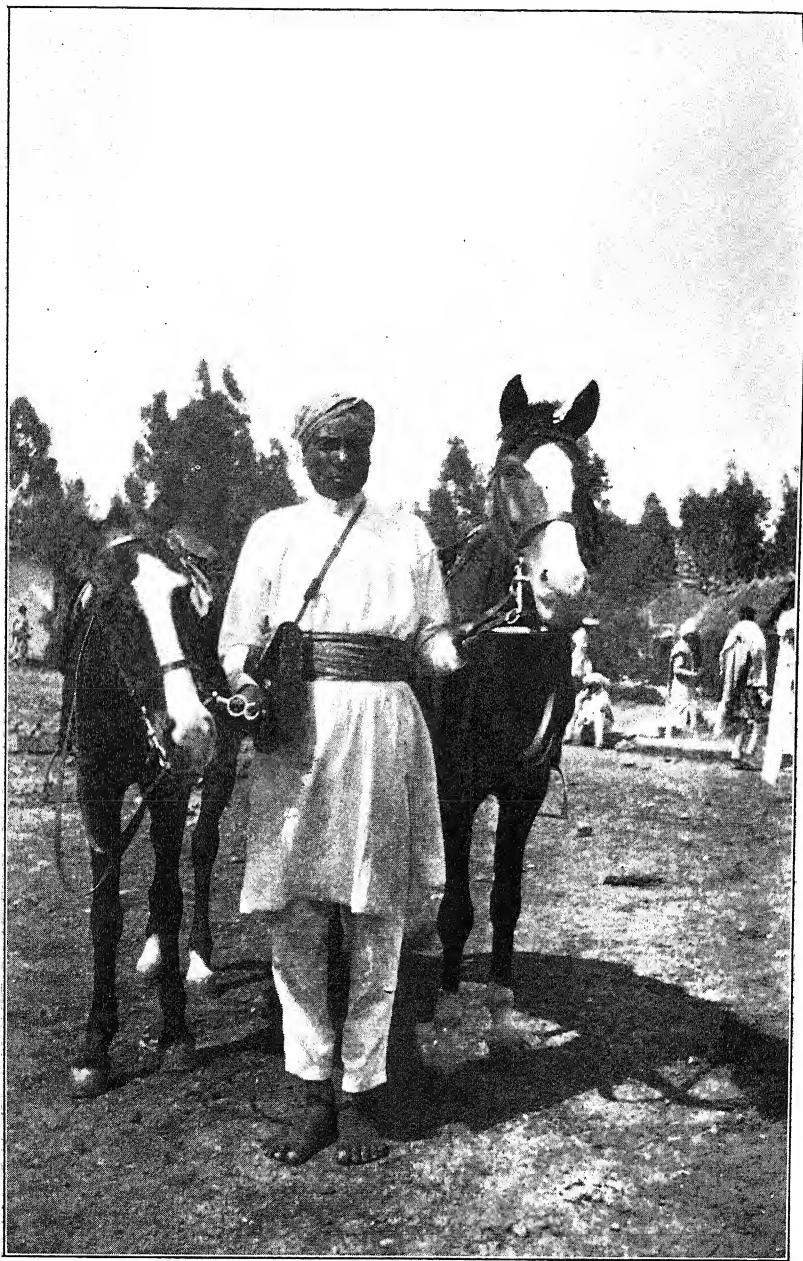
At last the loading was complete, and we hoped to start ; but now half our men had disappeared having, "forgotten something at home," or, seizing some equally slender excuse to get away, had retired for a final stirrup cup with some of their friends.

One man was being sued for debt by a creditor who fondly but erroneously imagined that the white man would pay up any sum to get his man off ; another had "mislaid" the rifle and cartridges with which he had been entrusted ; while at the very eleventh hour it was discovered that some of the loads had been lost to sight behind some trees and that we were two mules short to carry them.

However, these and all other first-day troubles and difficulties came to an end somehow, the great thing being to get the caravan away out of the town, no matter how short the first day's trek, and remedy minor deficiencies afterwards.

One luxury we were, however, compelled to dispense with. One of the delights of planning a trek from Addis Ababa is that, while in theory everybody knows the road to everywhere, no one knows any route when it comes down to hard fact. So, although we had received unlimited advice, we could get no definite geographical guidance, and eventually started off without a guide, trusting to a small map, a small compass, and that measure of good fortune without which no trek can be successful.

Apart from this shortage, however, we got away complete in all details shortly before midday, and on our way out westward stopped for lunch at the American Mission Hospital at Gulale, a remarkable institution run by remarkable people. This hospital has been constructed by the United Presbyterian Church of North America, which owes the beginnings of its work in Abyssinia to the influenza epidemic of 1918. At the time a chief living near the Sudanese frontier petitioned for medical help to be sent



"DAMISSE"

Our head syce and very loyal follower, with two typical Abyssinian ponies of ours.



from the Sudan for the relief of his subjects. In response to this call Dr. Lambie, of the United Presbyterian Church, established a station at Sayo in Western Abyssinia, and later emigrated to the capital. Here he was impressed with the urgent need of a proper medical institution, and, largely owing to his energy, sincerity, and capacity, the Regent donated a large piece of land in most lovely surroundings on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, and the American Mission supplied the funds (to which the Regent also contributed) for the erection of a very large well-planned hospital, which only needs the completion of its equipment and the necessary additions to its staff to make it the immense boon to the country which it ought to be.

There are two other hospitals in Addis Ababa in addition to the American mission institution, namely one founded by the Emperor Menelik, directed by a French doctor, which is in a perpetual state of re-building and repair and suffers from lack of equipment ; and a new hospital built by Ras Tafari. This latter is an admirable little place, under the direction of a very able Swedish surgeon, but even in this case there is no X-ray apparatus, a very necessary appliance in a country like this.

It is typical of Abyssinia that, instead of completing one institution and perfecting it in every way as regards installation and equipment, they should erect or contribute to the erection of no less than three, not one of which can be said to be complete in every detail. Effort is diffused instead of being concentrated.

There is crying need for hospital accommodation and elementary instruction in hygiene, if only as regards the matter of childbirth. The way in which children are brought into the world amongst the people makes one wonder that any survive, and the description of such an event is positively harrowing. They will not have the child born on a bed, and consequently the wretched mother lies on a dirty ox-hide on a filthy floor, in her oldest and dirtiest clothes, for such is the prescribed custom.

On one occasion of this kind which occurred at night the

only light was given by some bits of old rope soaked in grease and standing in a broken pot, and the doctor, on his knees on the ground amid all the filth, had to bring the child into the world by means of operating. Marvellous to relate, the child survived in this case. Of course among the more enlightened people things are not done in this way.

But to return to our journey. After enjoying Dr. and Mrs. Lambie's well-known and widely appreciated hospitality—the last civilised meal we were to have for some time—we pushed on towards our first night's camp through the wooded glades that surround the outskirts of Addis. The first bridge we came to was typical of many others we met en route; it consisted of branches of trees laid across posts driven into the river-bed, with some stones and earth sprinkled on the top. Large holes yawned in the surface, and the whole edifice shook ominously as the water raced below. After one mule had partly fallen through, the others wisely declined to have anything to do with it and preferred to trust to a neighbouring ford.

We found camp pitched in a bend of the Akaki River not far from a high and broad waterfall, a pleasant enough spot, lacking, however, in firewood—a frequent difficulty near Addis, where all the available wood has been cut down long ago. Our men had lined up to receive us, and made a brave attempt to present arms, with a miscellaneous assortment of Abyssinian army rifles, sporting rifles, and shot-guns, and then, to the accompaniment of the vocal efforts of innumerable hyenas, we enjoyed that most delightful of all sensations, the first night out in camp on *safari*.

The worries and bothers of organisation, of buying supplies, of wrangling with recalcitrant men and animals, are gone and forgotten; the turmoil and dust and noise and smell of the town is a thing of the past. Only there is the glorious African sky above one, the brilliant moon turning everything to silver, and the wealth of stars; the twinkling camp-fires, with the men in their ghostly white garments chattering round them; the long line of picketed ponies and mules

enjoying the last of their rations or a roll in the soft grass; and then gradually the whole camp sinks to rest, and only the old familiar bush noises come to one's drowsy ears, the cry of a hyena, the call of a bird, the croaking of the frogs, the chirping of the grasshoppers—surely there is no life like it in the world.

So we continued to think the next day when, after riding over the flat Managasha Plain and crossing several streams, our way led us through pretty, wooded country to an ideal camp on the north-west slopes of Mount Holata, amid dense woods and an abundance of brilliantly-coloured flowers and creepers, and Nature helped even to the extent of replenishing "the pot" by sending some pigeons within range of our guns, while a waterfall some way down the ravine added to the charm of the scenery and ministered to our needs.

Away across the ravine we could see the entrance to one of the old Abyssinian churches tunnelled into the side of the mountain, while above it stood a new building erected by the Empress in honour of the Virgin.

Our next day's ride took us past Gennet (Terrestrial Paradise) to Addis Alem (New World). At the first-named place on the summit of a hill stands the summer "palace" erected by the Emperor Menelik, consisting, as do all such places, of a number of buildings enclosed within a series of stone walls. The "palace" of Gennet was built by Indian workmen, and is not unlike an Indian bungalow in appearance; it is, however, not improved by the rather crude Indian paintings with which it is decorated.

Addis Alem, a few miles farther on, is an exquisite spot, covered with olive-trees and junipers and well watered by a number of small streams; here, again, Menelik built himself a "palace," and there is also a famous and rather fine church dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

Owing to the reckless manner in which the forests around Addis Ababa had been cut down for the use of Menelik's army and of the population, it was at one time contemplated to move the capital from that place to Addis

Alem. It was probably for this reason that the palace at Addis Alem was built; certainly sites for building were allotted to some of the few foreign diplomatic representatives then attached to the Court, and the Italians actually commenced building operations. But the situation was saved by the Emperor's policy in importing and planting in and around Addis immense quantities of the blue gum tree, and now the regulations for cutting down these trees are strict.

Near here we had to halt for a day or two, while runners were despatched back to Addis Ababa to bring out a pony or two that had been "mislaid," and a couple of extra men; the time passed pleasantly enough, for camp-life is always full of incident and interest.

One night our men came running back from the river, where they had gone for water, with a story of fearsome animals that had disturbed them. So we betook ourselves to the water's edge, only to find the great footprints of hippo; there were large numbers of them, and it was amusing to follow the broad tracks through the bush made by the unwieldy beasts on their way up from the river to feed on the grass and herbage higher up the banks; it would have been easy enough to have "bagged" one or two had we been so inclined—but it always seems to me that hippopotamus-shooting is about as sporting an effort as shooting the domestic cow. A well-known African sportsman once described how some Galla had come to him asking him to shoot some of these animals for them, and to show him how easy it was they led him to the bank of the river and began to call "*Robi, robi*," the Galla name for hippo. After waiting for a short time a full-grown hippo. put his nose above water and swam towards them, his mate joining him a few minutes later, accompanied by a young one. The three swam round within easy shot, while the Galla pelted them with stones, a form of greeting that in no way alarmed or disturbed the monsters, who, needless to say, were allowed to remain unharmed.

## CHAPTER VII

### ADDIS ALEM TO THE GUDIR RIVER

FROM Addis Alem onwards the trek was more than pleasant ; the rainy season having extended beyond its normal limits, the vegetation was more luxuriant than is usual at this time of year, and we rode through well-wooded country interspersed with banks and bushes of wild flowers, some of them smelling so strongly as to scent the air for quite a distance. One camping-ground in particular was particularly lovely, near a belt of trees on a river running between two steep hills covered with vegetation and dotted with flowering trees and bushes, while from the branches of the huge wild fig-tree under which our tent was pitched monkeys peered down at us, and occasionally threw figs at us, doubtless in indignation at the disturbance of their privacy.

It was hard sometimes to leave the very lovely surroundings of one's camp were it not for the knowledge that attractions of a different kind would probably be awaiting us at our next stopping-place, whether from the point of view of scenery, people, or animals.

Our path was now exceedingly rough and mountainous as we climbed steadily upwards to the great mountain-forest of Jam-Jam, valley succeeding valley, until at last we camped near the top of the range and could enjoy the wonderful panorama which stretched away on all sides, mountain after mountain covered with dark green forest, here and there a waterfall or a patch of bright green vegetation, all lighted up by the brilliant sunshine under a brilliant blue sky, with just a few fleecy clouds to break the monotony. The forest contains a variety of trees, of which the principal are the white and red junipers, olive, and a sort of white oak ;



some of them are very big, running to a height of nearly one hundred feet, so thick that four men with linked arms could barely span them. Goreza monkeys, with their long white tails and manes, jumped through the branches overhead, and birds of brilliant plumage added to the charm of the scene.

Soon after leaving this place we camped near Lagabata, an estate belonging to the Regent, where he has farms and cattle. Agriculture is another form of the many-sided activities of Ras Tafari, who, in addition to being Heir Apparent to the throne, Regent of the Empire, President of the Council, Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Home Affairs, indulges extensively in all sorts of schemes for the development of the resources of the country. Probably his most striking effort in the direction of agriculture is at Erer, in his own province of Harar, where a good deal of capital has been expended in the attempt to create a model farm, combined with a social experiment.

The land has been cleared for a considerable area ; water has been imported for irrigation purposes from the River Erer by means of an aqueduct nearly twenty-four feet high, leading into a canal six feet wide which runs through the property ; the hillside has been cut into terraces ; paths have been laid out, and buildings erected for the personnel. The whole of the initial expenditure is borne by the Regent, including the cost of sowing the first crops and making the first plantations, and he has also imported a consignment of more than two hundred different varieties of trees from America.

Later on it will be divided up into lots of a hectare, each of which will be in charge of a Galla who will work and maintain the land and gather the crops, of which he will be entitled to one-third as his share.

In that portion reserved for coffee the Galla will be entitled during the first three years to sow certain classes of cereals under the supervision of the plantation overseer ; he will be given the seeds free, and of these crops he will be entitled to a two-thirds share.

As these peasants will be exempted from the contribution of "forced labour" that is such a tax on the population generally, and will be subject directly to the Governor of Harar without the intervention of the local *Shum*, it is obvious that their lot will be a great improvement on that of most of their fellow-countrymen—provided always of course that the scheme is carried through and brought to fruition. For, as I have previously pointed out, many things are started in Abyssinia, but few are completed.

A day or two after leaving Lagabata we passed the sources of the Hawash River, the only important river flowing towards the Red Sea, that great stream which runs for some five hundred miles half across Abyssinia, through ever deepening and widening gorges, until, like so many other African rivers, it loses itself in the sands near Lake Aussa, which lies some sixty miles from the head of Tajura Bay on the Red Sea. Swinburne cannot have thought of the Hawash when he thanked "whatever gods maybe . . . that the weariest river winds safe at last to sea." Here at the source it is of course only a tiny stream running between steep banks clothed in palms and palm-trees of various kinds, and rich in long grass—an ideal camping-place had we only had time to spare.

By an alleged short cut through the mountains (which, like most "short cuts," took considerably longer than the ordinary track) we were now pursuing our way towards a village known as Ambo, where we proposed to leave the westerly route we had so far followed and strike off northwards by a new route to the Blue Nile.

After crossing the Dabissa River, however, we struck a Galla village, and as the result of a palaver with the inhabitants on the subject of guides our further progress came to a standstill. No inducement would persuade any of the inhabitants to come with us along the route we wished to follow, and they so worked on our men that we realised it would be very difficult to get them to go. They assured us the route was quite impracticable, that it was intersected

continuously with deep ravines which our pack-mules could not cross, and dry stretches of country where we should infallibly perish from thirst ; and, above all, that it was infested with *shiftas* (i.e. brigands) who would make life exceedingly uncomfortable for us.

Personally I do not believe in the existence of these mythical bands of outlaws ; we had been told that an expedition that had left Addis Ababa shortly after ours had been attacked by *shiftas* and severely handled, but later information showed that the *shiftas* had really been the inhabitants of a village through which the caravan had passed, and with whom some of the caravan men had quarrelled. The chief of the village, by way of helping matters, had then seized the rifles of the caravan escort, and there had been much delay and trouble.

This story, incomplete and garbled, had added to our men's fears ; and they were extremely anxious for us to turn back, retrace our steps eastwards for some days, and then proceed north to the Nile by a caravan route which they knew of. This of course we flatly refused to do, and it was eventually decided that we should continue to push on westwards past Ambo, crossing to the west of the Gudir River, and then strike northwards through the unknown country of Gudru (unknown to Europeans) by a route which, as they knew nothing of it, seemed to offer them fewer terrors.

So on we went through a regular forest of hill-tops, the mountains towering round on every side as far as the eye could see, great masses of peaks, round, flat, and pointed, covered with woods, rent by great fissures, pierced by rocky defiles and passes—indeed, we seemed to be riding on the roof of the world. Our path wound up and down, now dropping into the gorges of rivers, which we crossed by fords, all boulders and deep pools, now climbing a pass to get over the shoulder of one of the mountains in our way. We met the fantastic “ candelabra euphorbia ” trees again, with their square branches tipped by bunches of red or

yellow flowers, passed blackberry-bushes, and then, dropping through some mimosa woods, fell into Ambo, a large, straggling, picturesque village perched on the shoulder of the mountain.

It is built on the side of the Huluka River, a swiftly running, deepish stream, where we had rather a difficult crossing above a waterfall, falling into pools, and slipping on large boulders on to which we had to jump from insecure taking-off ground ; how the loaded pack mules managed to get across was a mystery to me.

The dignity of our caravan leader suffered somewhat here, as did his immaculate raiment, by reason of his sitting down suddenly and involuntarily in a deepish and not too clean pool ; I gathered also from his somewhat peevish remarks that the bottom of the said pool was not entirely free from sharp stones, a fact which had been brought home to him pointedly when he sat down. The other men's shouts of joy at the mishap did nothing to soothe his lacerated feelings.

Needless to say, after we had spent quite a long while at the crossing and had got nearly all the caravan over, the inhabitants who had been watching us with interest informed us that there was a bridge not far away, and sure enough we saw it later on, a flimsy structure thrown over the river at a spot where the high cliffs almost met above the foaming, tumbling waters.

A very interesting feature of the place was a series of hot watersprings. On the western side of the river there is a gully between two cliffs, and from one of these hot water which is alleged to possess medicinal properties runs out in a small but steady stream. The most curious part of it was that across the mouth of the gully there stretched in a long, irregular line for some twenty or thirty yards a quantity of whitish-grey rocks of various sizes, and from the tops of these rocks in a number of different places hot water was trickling out and running down to the ground. The rocks varied from quite big boulders to comparatively small stones, but in all cases the water was bubbling out of the *top* of

them. I have been quite unable to find any explanation of this curious phenomenon.

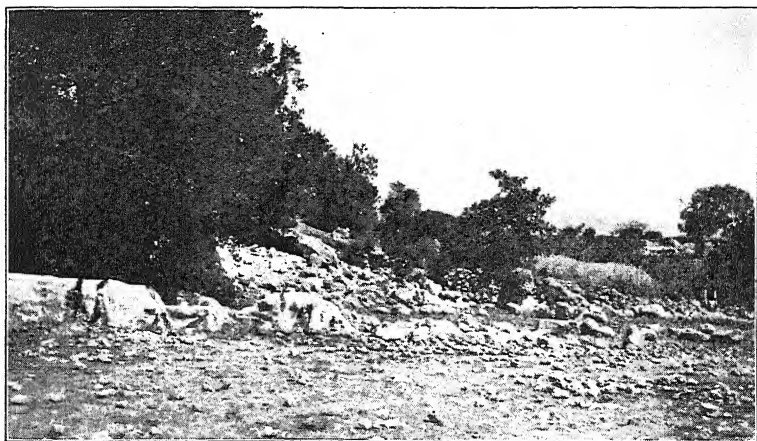
The main stream of water, issuing from the cliff side, had been piped into a sort of rough stone bath by the ex-Emperor Lej Yasu, and over this he had caused to be erected some huts, thus forming a kind of Central African Turkish bath, which is apparently much patronised in the locality. The door was padlocked, but the janitor was only too glad to take us in, and, peering through the gloom, we discerned a number of dark figures squatting motionless in the water up to their necks. A piece of once white cotton sheeting divided the bath into two portions, and in the upper one of these, a kind of first-class reserved section, were the superior people, some of the village *élite*, no doubt.

The water runs through these two baths into a third and separate bath in another hut, which is kept for people suffering from diseases of various kinds ; into this we did not penetrate.

The bath-attendant was quite grieved when we made it clear that we could not stay to sample the bathing ; whether he thought that we looked as if we needed it or whether a desire to add to the revenue was uppermost in his mind, I was not sure ; but as his countenance brightened perceptibly on receipt of a small coin we may hope that the latter was the real reason.

From here we went on through very lovely mountain and woodland scenery, leaving the great mountain of Tulu Dimtu away on the south, until we began to drop to the valley of the Gudir River, one of the many large tributaries of the Blue Nile.

Through thickening mimosa and other woods we clambered down a fairly precipitous descent to the Gudir itself, which even now in the dry season and right away from its junction with the Nile is a large, rushing stream running between cliffs forty to fifty feet high, about sixty feet wide, and too deep to ford with comfort. The bed of the stream was a mass of rocks and boulders, and it dropped



#### HOT WATER SPRINGS AT AMBO

A curious phenomenon. The dark patches on the line of rocks in the foreground represent hot water trickling out of the *tops* of the rocks.



#### IN CAMP

Across the men's tents is stretched a line of strips of raw meat to dry in the sun, whilst circling above are hungry vultures, hawks, and crows.



over a series of small falls for about one hundred yards just where we crossed. And there, to our astonishment, we found, forty feet up in the air, a real bridge, probably one of those built by the Portuguese in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century—a really remarkable structure for this country.

The bridge was obviously old, the peasants could only tell us that it had always been there, and, in any case, it was quite unlike any other bridge I have ever seen in Abyssinia. It consisted of a single arch thrown across the narrowest part of the rocky gorge through which the river ran; it was strongly buttressed, built of stone and what looked like lime mortar. Below the arch ran an old weather-worn beam which seemed, old as it was, to be of more recent date than the bridge itself; the footway was of beaten earth, and there was no handrail or parapet of any kind.

It was a delightful adjunct to a grand bit of scenery, and we warmly congratulated our caravan leader on his choice of a site; he was a perfect genius at discovering pleasant spots for pitching camp, but he had excelled himself this time. Our tents were tucked in among trees on a bluff, a miniature peninsula, with the river running on three sides of it some way below, while around was a panorama of towering peaks, and we could see the Gudir winding its way among them towards the north, where it joins its great brother the Blue Nile. The pool below was the habitat of a couple of hippopotami, who later on gave us audible proof of their presence, and we were able to add variety to our menu from among the quantity of game which abounded. Wood was plentiful, and three roaring fires lit up the camp after sundown and added another picturesque element to the scene.

It being Christmas Day, we decided to give our men and animals a rest, and when to this news we added the glad tidings that they could buy an ox to eat, if they could find one in a village near by, our popularity ran high. Shortly afterwards a fine beast was driven into camp, which was secured for the modest sum of the equivalent of thirty



shillings, and amid great rejoicing it was, within an hour, killed, skinned, cut up, and divided amongst the five "messes." Our men now reverting to type, looked like real savages, being covered with blood and bits of meat, for they had all taken a hand in the dismemberment of the ox ; they squatted round the pile of red flesh and had a great raw-meat banquet, gorging themselves to their hearts' content.

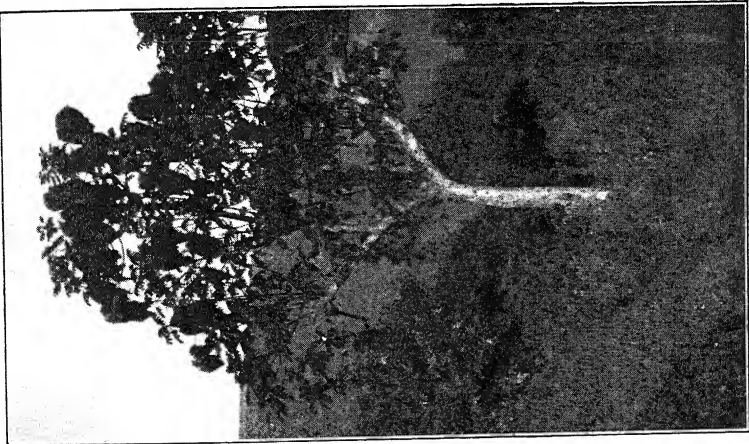
But before they started on their meal they all formed up before the tent, thanked my wife for her Christmas gift, and wished us a happy feast-day—a pleasant and quite spontaneous effort on their part. Incidentally it may be mentioned that, though it was our Christmas Day, it was not theirs, which does not happen until 7th January.

On the next day we made a further examination of the old bridge, and questioned some natives about it who had come in from a neighbouring village. Since our return I have also made researches on the question, but I have not found amongst the records of Portuguese activity in Abyssinia any evidence as to the construction of this particular bridge, though it is probable that it was either constructed by them or at a slightly later date under their influence ; it is known that after the Muslim invasion many of the Portuguese married native women and settled down in Tigre and Gojam.

They have left wonderful monuments to their skill farther north near Gondar, where the ruins existent to-day are remarkable examples of the builders' skill.

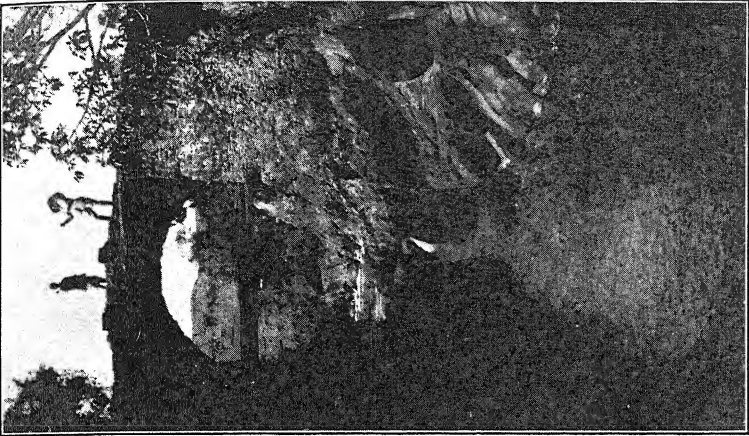
Many of these were described by Bruce, and it was the amazing character of these structures, so utterly different from anything else to be found in Abyssinia, that led his ill-informed and untravelled critics to impugn the veracity of Bruce's story—later evidence has enabled us to see that on this, as well as on many other disputed points, Bruce was perfectly correct.

The first buildings to be erected were a church and a fortified convent built by the Jesuits, who accompanied and followed Bermudez about the middle of the sixteenth century, at the top of a high hill in the centre of a large plain



KOSSO TREE

From the clusters of brilliant scarlet flowers, shaped like bunches of grapes, with which these trees are covered, is made the anti-temia medicine universally taken in Abyssinia.



ON THE GUDIR RIVER

An ancient stone bridge over the upper reaches. It is possibly due to the Portuguese in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, or to later Portuguese influence.



at Fremona, about twelve miles from Axum, the ruins consisting in Bruce's time of stone walls twenty-five feet high, with towers in the flanks and angles.

But the most remarkable constructional efforts were those due to the Jesuit Peter Paez, who arrived at Fremona in 1603 or 1604. He appears to have been not merely a missionary, but "architect, mason, smith, and carpenter, and to have been able personally to manage with equal dexterity all the instruments used by each trade in the several stages of the work."

On the peninsula of Gorgora, a hilly, wooded promontory running about four miles into Lake Tana at the north-west corner, he found a good quarry of white stone, and taught the workmen how to cut and lay the stones, using clay instead of mortar.

We are told that the Abyssinians saw with the utmost astonishment the erection of great stone buildings of a nature which they had never seen, and that "it was with amazement mixed with terror that they saw a house rise upon a house, for so they call the different storeys."

At Gorgora, Paez built a church which was consecrated in 1621 and a magnificent palace for the Emperor; on the plain of Dembea he built another very fine church supported by Ionic columns, a bridge near Gondar, and another over the Abbai, still standing; he probably rebuilt the famous church of Martolu Mariam, described by Dr. Beke.

Dr. Beke discovered there an edifice, the walls of which were in a perfect state, built of stone in the form of a Roman cross. The interior was adorned with carvings of freestone of exquisite workmanship, as fresh and sharp as if recently executed. The current tradition was that the work had been executed in the early fifteenth century before the arrival of the Portuguese, and even before the Muslim invasion.

The most wonderful of the palaces and other buildings in Gondar do not appear to have been built by the Portuguese, as is generally stated, but of course they owe their

inspiration to Portuguese influence, and the workmen were doubtless men who had been formerly instructed by the Portuguese.

For example, Fasilidas, who expelled the Portuguese at the beginning of his reign (1632-65), had a magnificent palace built by Indian masons and Abyssinian workmen containing an audience hall 120 feet long and surrounded by a stone wall 30 feet high and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles in circumference; the palace was four storeys high, flanked with towers and defended by an inner and an outer battlemented wall.

The same king also built in 1645 the church of Takla Haymanot, the most celebrated of all the forty-four churches in and around Gondar, which was not destroyed until the Dervish invasion of 1857; and it was this monarch who really made Gondar a city, the capital of Abyssinia, and the centre of the trade of all that part of the country, with a population of nearly 50,000. Until the advent of his father it had been an obscure village.

In spite of its magnificent position, it has now been reduced by invasion and pillaging to a mere collection of huts clustered round these relics of bygone glory, and though it is beginning to revive as a trade centre the population is probably not more than 7,000 to 8,000.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FROM THE GUDIR RIVER THROUGH CHELLEA TO GUDRU

It was with much regret that we turned our backs on our most beautiful resting-place by the Gudir and pushed on northwards. But the morning's ride, up through a steep pass, was almost like going through fairyland, through thick woods full of flowers, while now and then through clearings in the trees, when the path wound out near the edge of the cliffs, the view stretched for miles and miles across plain and valley between mountains that seemed to have no end, whilst far below our feet the junction of the Huluka and Gudir Rivers was marked by a deep, dark depression that dropped right down out of sight.

This district had, up to three or four years ago, been overrun by bands of *shiftas*, and we passed a number of heavily stockaded enclosures in which the *nagadis* (travelling merchants) would spend the night with their caravans of mules for safety.

But the Governor had then bestirred himself to some point, and after a short and spirited effort, resulting in the decoration of many trees with the bodies of the disturbers of the peace, law and order had resumed their sway.

We turned north along the line of the Gudir, into which flowed a number of smaller rivers, each of which meant dropping into a ravine and climbing up the opposite bank. A moving bog of black mud held us up for part of a day, a most difficult obstacle, where the terrified animals sank to the girths and had to be pulled out with much labour and no little danger to their legs. It was fortunate that our gear was well packed, for by the time we were through

everything was caked with this most adhesive and evil-smelling compound.

After some days of this variegated travelling we reached the big village of Gedo in Chellea. Here we had contemplated pitching our camp under a large and attractive-looking wild fig-tree standing in a secluded spot a little way out of the village ; but no sooner had the first few packs been deposited there than we realised why the tree was so secluded. Myriads of the large black biting ants evidently regarded it as their private domain, and they descended on us with a ferocity which has to be seen, or rather felt, in order to be believed. Our men, with their bare legs and feet, suffered severely, and seemed from a distance to be indulging in a new sort of dance as they leaped in the air when an especially vigorous ant got home on them. It was impossible to stop there, and we had to beat an ignominious retreat ; never have I seen packing up camp performed with greater expedition, though it was no easy matter to load up the animals, who were driven wild by the attacks of the ants.

Camp was pitched about a mile beyond Gedo, and whether it was that the habits of the ants had affected the nature of the inhabitants of the village or not I cannot say, but certain it is that this was one of the few places where we encountered any difficulty with the Galla. We had been busy " doctoring " the usual ailments that develop amongst one's men on trek—my wife's department this—a bad eye, a gathering due to a neglected wound, a burned hand, a cold on the chest, toothache, and a couple of cases of fever, besides a few minor ailments, while I had been attending to the veterinary department, when loud and persistent sounds of anger from one end of the camp indicated trouble of kinds.

We never interfered with matters of this sort unless absolutely necessary, as it is better to let these people settle their own difficulties in their own way. But the general air of excitement was rather out of the ordinary, and when



GEDO  
A typical village in Chellea.



Peasants of Gudru, a branch of Gallas.





I saw a party of villagers with spears and a few Abyssinians with rifles invading the sacred limits of the camp it was clear that something unusual was in the air. So, having sent for our headman and the representative of the villagers, I settled down to enquire into the business, and discovered that, as usual, there was a lady in the case—" *cherchez la femme* " in times of trouble is as true in Africa as in Europe.

Apparently two of our men had gone into the village " to buy bread " according to their own account, and in the course of their marketing had got into trouble in one of the huts, smashing everything in it, and " insulted a lady." The villagers, backed by the Abyssinian satellites of the local chief, who unfortunately was away, proposed to seize my man, and hold him for trial until the Chief returned—this incidentally would have meant that the wretched man would undoubtedly have been condemned to a heavy fine which he could not have paid, and so would be kept in chains for a year or two, unless he died in the meanwhile of starvation, for prisoners have to rely for their food upon their friends, and of course he had none out here. Alternatively we should have had to halt the caravan for days, or pay a large fine, which was probably an impudent attempt at blackmail; and in either event our prestige would have suffered severely, and we should have felt the consequences for some time along our route.

The villagers refused to compromise or to allow me to act as *shimagille* or judge, and I of course refused to allow my man to go. Matters were then made worse by some of our people ostentatiously producing rifles, an effort which we discouraged rapidly and forcibly.

It was obviously a case for diplomacy, and, after allowing tempers to cool for a little while, I managed through the intermediary of the most sensible of our people to impress our troublesome visitors with a sense of our vast importance and influence, and the dangers they would incur by annoying us, after which they retired for private consultation, and in a little while the matter was compromised by a payment

of four dollars for the broken hut and furniture, while the minor question of compensation for the lady's "honour" was waived.

So ended what might have proved an awkward incident, and we all parted the best of friends, our quondam antagonists presenting us with a large load of grass for our animals as a parting gift, and attending *en masse* to see us off.

In the course of our next day's march we met with groves of the famous and very beautiful *kosso* tree—perhaps the most remarkable tree in Abyssinia. It runs to thirty or forty feet in height, is very regular in shape, and its foliage is a pretty light green. It is, at bearing-time, thickly covered with masses of a brilliant red flower hanging in bunches like clusters of grapes, and when these flowers fade they turn brown and are crushed up, mixed with water, and taken as an anti-tape-worm medicine by all Abyssinians, high and low of every degree. It is a regular and understood procedure for one's servants to take a day off once a month for this purpose, and it is quite common to be told that an Abyssinian of position cannot receive you because he has taken *kosso*. The prevalence of tape-worm is due to the national indulgence in raw meat, known as *broundo*, and I have been told by an Abyssinian doctor that many Abyssinians die every year not only from the evil effects of the presence of this parasite, but also from the effects of taking drugs to deal with it.

The *kosso*-plant indirectly played a not unimportant part in history. The family of the self-made Emperor Theodore was supposed to have been in very poor circumstances at one time, and it was commonly reported that his mother had been obliged to sell *kosso* in the streets of Gonda, to earn her living. This story was repeated in a book written by the missionary Stern, who somewhat rashly afterwards returned to the country. Theodore was of course told of this, and gave it as one of his reasons for imprisoning Stern and the other missionaries, an act which led later on to the despatch of the Napier expedition.

Another interesting tree of rather fine appearance which we met with here was the *danissa*, from the long, slender, creeper-like branches of which the natives make rope which they use in the construction of their *tukuls*. And we were also fortunate enough to be able to get roots and seeds of the Abyssinian red-hot-poker plant, which had not previously found its way to Europe.

By this time we had got up again to over 10,000 feet, having been sadly led astray by the vagaries of an alleged guide, whom we had acquired at a village some time previously ; we spent some bitterly cold nights at this elevation ; heavy dew fell during the night, and on going out of our tent at about 6 a.m. I found that our breakfast table was covered with ice, although quite soon afterwards we were grilling on our ponies' backs. Our men were simply paralysed on these occasions ; they cannot stand cold at all, and perhaps this is hardly surprising when one realises that their clothing consists solely of a cotton shirt and trousers, with the addition of their cotton *shamma* and a single woollen blanket at night to keep off the cold of sleeping on the ground.

We were now crossing the slopes of Mount Amara, and from near the summit we had a wonderful view of the immense stretch of undulating country sloping down towards the valley of the Abbai, while beyond, showing dimly through the hazy distance, could be seen the faint outlines of the mountains of Gojam.

Far away on the west I could see through field-glasses what appeared to be a large stretch of level plain ; my men assured me, however, that these were lakes entirely covered with what they described as " short grass growing on the top of the water." They assured me they were not swamps, nor yet reeds growing out of the water. Unfortunately time would not allow of our diverging so far from our route to examine this curious phenomenon.

Through more mimosa forests we dropped down into warmer altitudes, and, just before crossing the boundary

into the province of Gudru, we had our first experience of the hospitality of the rulers of these little-known parts. We were camped at the edge of a wood below some hills at Lencha Chacha when away in the distance we heard the sound of trumpets, and our headman ran in in a state of great excitement to say that the Sub-Governor of the district, Fitawrari Desta, was coming to visit us. Hasty preparations for the reception followed, the tent was cleaned out, the camp tidied up, and our men formed themselves up into a sort of guard of honour headed by "the Emperor," who had been preparing himself for the occasion by combing out his hair with a couple of porcupine quills, and had draped his *shamma* around him below his arms, as is appropriate on these solemn occasions.

The sound of trumpets grew louder, and then down the hillside came an imposing array of men, mounted and on foot, and fairly bristling with rifles, spears, and shields. The Governor was riding a mule, his war-horse being led behind him, and, dismounting, he came into camp with his followers, expressing his delight at meeting the first white people who had visited his country. He said that he had heard that a foreigner, a great personage, was travelling in his district, and that he knew he must be a very great personage indeed, because he had brought his wife with him!

It is indeed true that my wife's presence on this and on the other treks we have done together was not only always a source of absorbing interest to these people, but also of the greatest possible help in every way. They seemed thereby inspired to redouble their natural courtesy, already great; and by her tact and resource in dealing with them we received assistance and facilities which I am sure would not have come my way had I been alone.

The worst of these visits is that they are apt to extend indefinitely, and to become rather a strain on the supply of one's topics of conversation. In the present case after some three and a half hours I suggested a photographic séance,

a proposal which was accepted with alacrity, our guest retiring behind the screen of his men's *shammas* to prepare himself for the ordeal, which I am glad to say passed off successfully, and I was able later on to send him some enlarged pictures of himself and his very striking following.

Meanwhile, gifts of foodstuffs had begun to arrive—bags of barley and stacks of grass for the ponies, a sheep for ourselves, followed by a large white bull, and finally—and most delicate touch of all—a native basket filled to the brim with roses for my wife.

The departure now took place with as much ceremony as the arrival, and our men, once again possessing themselves of all our sporting rifles and guns, escorted the Governor to the edge of the clearing ; we watched the picturesque little army wind its way up into the mountains until it was lost to sight amid the trees, and only the faint sound of trumpets in the distance still reminded us of the very pleasant visit of this most courteous Abyssinian gentleman, who had in such a charming fashion made us free of his domains.

I have often since thought when hearing people in Europe talk of "African savages" that the said "savages" could give some so-called civilised races points in many ways, especially in the western world to-day.

## CHAPTER IX

### THROUGH GUDRU TO THE NILE VALLEY

WHILE we were in camp at Lencha Chacha we were fortunate enough to see some of the ceremonies attendant on a Galla wedding. About fifty men dressed in freshly washed white robes rode headlong across the plains towards us to fetch the bride from her native village, and after about four hours of the most energetic chattering the bride was mounted on a mule, and in the midst of the troop rode off to her new home. The Galla especially in this district—a great horse-breeding centre—are fine horsemen, and they “showed off” to great advantage galloping their ponies wildly over fearfully broken ground, engaging in mimic fights, pursuing the defeated “enemy,” and generally giving us a great circus display.

We had previously been able to take a more intimate part in a real Abyssinian wedding, not a specialised function such as takes place occasionally among the *haut monde*, but one typical of the customs of the people, conducted by an Abyssinian priest at the *tukul* of the bridegroom’s father.

These affairs start in this way. When two young people wish to marry, or when, as is more often the case, their parents wish them to marry, the father of the prospective bridegroom sends two or three *shimagille* or old men to the father of the proposed bride to convey the proposal. It is not etiquette for a definite answer to be given at this stage, so the girl’s father, after much palaver and consumption of liquid refreshment, says he will think about it. After two or three weeks the old men return to the charge, and if, as is usually the case, they receive a favourable answer, they come back and report accordingly. A few days later a “best man” is chosen, and he conveys to the bride-elect a

ring which she ties on a string round her neck and does not wear on her finger until after the marriage ceremony. Then the bridegroom's father calls personally on the family, and after that the girl virtually belongs to her future husband, and if she does not go through with the marriage ceremony her father has to pay damages.

In due course the actual wedding takes place. The bridegroom and his friends proceed to his father-in-law's place, and spend a night there, camped on the bit of ground which usually surrounds every *tukul*, however humble. They play a quaint game here ; the bride and four or five of her " bridesmaids " dress up exactly alike and are thickly veiled ; one (not necessarily the bride) sits in a corner, the rest in a line apart. Then the principal " best man " (there are generally two) has to guess which is the bride and to present her to her husband ; and as he usually makes several " misses " this causes great excitement and huge merriment, and, being conducted with great formality, lasts a long while—on the present occasion he made three mistakes, to the great delight of the assembled guests.

On the next day the whole party migrate *en masse* to the home of the bridegroom's father, who has to accommodate his guests in *tukuls* or tents specially borrowed for the occasion, and supply them with a few sheep—or possibly an ox if he is rich enough—to kill and eat raw, and an adequate supply of *talla*—native beer.

Here the actual wedding ceremony takes place ; and it was on this occasion a scene of much liveliness. In the huts and tents scores of guests were squatting in an unspeakable atmosphere, consuming " refreshments " galore, both liquid and solid, singing, playing on strange native instruments, and generally enjoying themselves in their own way. After a little we were ushered into the *tukul* where the principal guests were crowded together, and when I say there are no windows and only one smallish entrance in such a hut, that it was filled to repletion, and that the day was a hot one, the atmosphere may be imagined.



Across one corner was hung a sheet of *abugedid*, and behind this, crowded together like sardines in a tin, squatting on stools, were the bride and bridegroom and two "bridesmaids." All were decked out in all the usual native clothes they had, and were wrapped up as if on a frosty winter's day, so they were streaming with perspiration, and, being covered with butter, the aroma was, to say the least of it, noticeable.

The bride was so covered up as to be invisible—over all her usual Abyssinian clothes she wore a thick, heavy woollen burnous, and on the top of it a man's large grey felt hat of European make, her face being covered by a thick muslin veil.

I could not at the time imagine why they had thus foregathered behind a curtain in the corner, but later on it was explained to me that this is an important part of the ceremony. The "bridesmaids" were supposed to be ascertaining whether the bride was really *virgo intacta*, and they had to report on this matter to the bridegroom's father. If she were, all would be well; if not, there would be great trouble, and the bride's father would be hauled over the coals, damages asked for, and possibly (though not probably) the whole affair might be called off.

I was invited to take some photographs, and for this there was much ado; a special place was arranged in the garden, rugs and stools brought out, a tent pulled down to give more space, and then the bridal party emerged and took up position. The bride's veil was removed by the "best man," who arranged her garments and fussed about her like an old hen. Neither the bridegroom nor the "bridesmaids" paid the slightest attention to her, being too busy with their own toilet.

After having had to photograph the whole party of guests, we were surrounded by an enthusiastic crowd, and as some of the ladies seemed to be getting a little too demonstrative in their sympathetic attitude, we felt that the time for departure had arrived, and we tore ourselves away just as one damsel had started a sort of *danse du ventre* for our special benefit.



#### AN ABYSSINIAN WEDDING

The bride is in the middle, with the bridegroom on her right, and a "bridesmaid" on her left. Behind her the "best man."



#### AN ABYSSINIAN WEDDING

The wedding guests outside the "tukul" of the bridegroom's father.



I may mention here that, although it is generally believed that an Abyssinian marriage celebrated in a church cannot be dissolved, I do not think that this is universally true. If people married in this way disagree, or one of them commits too many "indiscretions," there can be a sort of amiable arbitration to dissolve the bond. Each party nominates a *shimagille* (an elder) to represent them, and these two confer and discuss and argue, and if they find either party in fault they send the two away from each other and assess damages.

I do not suppose this constitutes a legal divorce, but it comes to much the same thing; and, although the Church would probably not marry either of the two again, that would not, I imagine, trouble them, as the other two civil forms of marriage are so simple and elastic that no one need remain unmarried for long.

To return to our journey, Fitawrari Desta had been very anxious that we should visit him in his own home; unfortunately, this lay some distance out of our way, and, as we were much behind our scheduled time owing to the longer route we had been compelled to follow, we decided to divide forces, my wife taking charge of the caravan and pushing on, while I returned the Fitawrari's visit, and, riding light and fast, hoped to catch up the caravan later in the day—a course which nearly led to disaster.

Before daybreak on the morrow I had started on my early-morning call, and soon reached the Governor's dwelling. It was more like a fortress than anything else, being situated at the top of a steep rise on the slopes of Mount Amara. We were received with great pomp and led by the guard through five stockades of stout, pointed sticks about eight or ten feet high by a narrow path leading through even narrower gateways into the innermost yard, in the midst of which stood the main dwelling-place. This was a single room, a round *tukul* about thirty-five feet in diameter made of *chika* (mud and straw); the roof was of thatch, and inside it was neatly finished off with plaited coloured straw in concentric rings.

The room—which served all purposes—was divided into two unequal parts by a long strip of white *abugedid* hung along posts of roughly-hewn wood supporting the roof, and the furniture—wholly native-made—consisted of a large bed, a sort of divan, a basket-work table, and some chairs. Some eastern rugs covered the divan and table, and portraits of the Empress and Regent adorned the walls.

There followed much consumption of *tej*, the national drink resembling mead, and thick sweet coffee—rather an ordeal at that early hour—and then I was paid the somewhat unusual honour of being invited to meet the Fitawrari's family, consisting of his mother, his wife, a little daughter, and a smaller son, of whom the last-named fled from me in terror—a white face was too much for his nerves.

Simple and primitive as were the surroundings, Fitawrari Desta did the honours of his house as though it were Buckingham Palace, and, as he seemed loth to let me go, I once again adopted the device of a photographic séance to break up the meeting.

This took some time, and when I climbed into the saddle to resume the journey the sun was high in the heavens, and the temperature such as to make fast riding across broken country quite strenuous. Moreover, I observed that my men and ponies had not been forgotten whilst I was being feted; the ponies had been stuffed with barley and the men had obviously—too obviously—been provided with liquid refreshment on a generous scale.

Fortunately the Fitawrari had fitted us out with a mounted guide, a fine type of Galla horseman who really did know the way, and we were consequently able to pick up the caravan soon after midday, after passing the Kella or frontier customs house of Gudru: here we sent our party on ahead to get into camp against our arrival, while my wife and I indulged in some much-needed rest and food.

And then we rode on and on for hour after hour and not a sign of the caravan was to be seen, which was the more astonishing inasmuch as we had been promised that the



A HOSPITABLE GOVERNOR  
 Fitawrari Desta outside his house, with (right  
 to left) his little daughter, mother, wife, and an  
 attendant.



GALLA HORSEMAN  
 Guide provided by Fitawrari Desta.



afternoon trek would be a short one. We passed places amply provided with water and grass quite obviously suitable for camping, but our people seemed to have vanished into space, the hard ground showed no tracks, and, anyhow, we could not have distinguished the tracks of our own mules from those of others which had passed that way—unfortunately, all our shod ponies whose tracks might have given us a clue were with ourselves.

At last we halted on a rise, and, after despatching the men who were with us in various directions to spy out the land, and receiving their negative reports, we decided to sleep where we were, minus tent, beds, and other comforts. Our men were tired and hungry and thoroughly alarmed by now, for the country was (as usual and no doubt incorrectly) reported to be full of *shiftas* who would be much attracted by our ponies and other belongings, and we had only a couple of rifles with us. We were arranging to make beds of grass for warmth and to cut down bushes for a good fire to keep off the hyenas, when through the falling darkness we heard a "coee" far away down the valley which our men assured us came from one of our own people; we worked our way towards each other, and to our intense relief met a couple of our *zabañas*, who had been sent out with a mule laden with our beds to find us. It appeared that the caravan was only about an hour and a half's ride away, so off through the darkness we plunged, ponies jogging, mules ambling, men running; tumbling into holes, scratched and torn by bushes, and bumping into rocks.

Our joy may be imagined when at last we toiled into camp, though our pleasure was rather marred by the fact that a fight started instantly between the men who had lost us and those who had been lost by us, which had to be quelled vigorously and rapidly by setting everybody to work on clearing up things. Camp was a scene of utter chaos; half the men had been out looking for us, the headman and our two personal boys were still lost, not a tent was up, the ground was strewn with packages and boxes,



it was pitch-dark, there was no moon, and no fires had been lighted.

Apparently the caravan had turned off the track into some thickish bush to camp in a pleasant spot by some water, hidden away by trees, and had not left a man or the usual sign of crossed sticks to warn us of this divergence from the narrow path. They had not heard us ride past, and had been in a state of great alarm at our non-arrival.

The headman and our boys did not arrive until midday on the morrow ; they had ridden on looking for us until night had overtaken them in a neighbouring village, where they had rented a hut for the night for themselves and their three mules, and, having no money with them, had paid for their lodging with two cartridges !

In the course of the day's trek we had been surprised to pass a caravan consisting almost entirely of porters carrying head-loads ; they were packages of *berberi* (red pepper) made up into loads weighing two *frasulas*, about 75 lbs. each, a good load for a man for a day's march. The usual practice is for everything to be carried by animal transport, and it is only in the west, by the Gore-Bure route, that human carriers are used, owing to the precipitous character of the roads, and even then the practice is not universal. When we had crossed a caravan track we had frequently met *nagadis* with their long strings of pack ponies, mules, and donkeys ; and ghastly sights indeed were these unfortunate animals when one saw them unloaded. There was hardly one to be found in a whole caravan that did not exhibit to a greater or less extent the most horrible sores and raw places, and it is amazing how the poor beasts can march for hours at a stretch day after day in this condition. It is still more amazing that their owners should reduce them to and work them in this state ; one would have thought that, quite apart from any feeling of humanity, it would have paid them better to devote a little more attention to their saddlery so as to preserve their animals for a longer life of utility.

## CHAPTER X

### THROUGH GUDRU TO THE NILE VALLEY (*continued*)

AFTER a day's enforced rest to allow the missing members of the caravan to rejoin, we trekked on through very beautiful country; indeed I do not think that I have seen scenery more delightful and more varied than we met with in Gudru. It is exceedingly mountainous, thickly wooded, well watered—on one day alone we crossed nine rivers and streams—and abounds in flowers, flowering shrubs, and flowering trees. To name only a few, we saw yellow and white single roses, masses of scented white jasmine, wild raspberries, blackberries, hollyhocks, wild mignonette, red-hot poker, scarlet aloes, yellow daisies, date and other palms, both yellow and white mimosa, wild olive and fig trees, and many other flowers and bushes of which the names and species were unfamiliar to us.

One particularly lovely ride was through a long wood of trees twenty to thirty feet high, so thickly covered with bright yellow flowers in the shape of fluffy balls that the leaves were almost hidden, whilst below and in between them were large bushes of a mauve flower. Photography can give but a feeble idea of the beauty of the country mainly owing to the loss of colour.

There was a good deal of cultivation, and villages were not infrequent. We passed through two quite large ones—almost towns in the African sense of the word—Konbolcha, which incidentally was about fifty miles out of its place according to the map, and Ambabo, at the northern edge of the spur of mountains running out towards the Blue Nile, and about twenty miles from the beginning of the escarpment.

These two places each covered a considerable area; it

took nearly three-quarters of an hour for our caravan to cross the latter. They were not stockaded or enclosed in any way, but straggled out on no sort of principle, each *tukul* having a longish piece of ground belonging to it, the limits of which might or might not be indicated by a rough line of cactus.

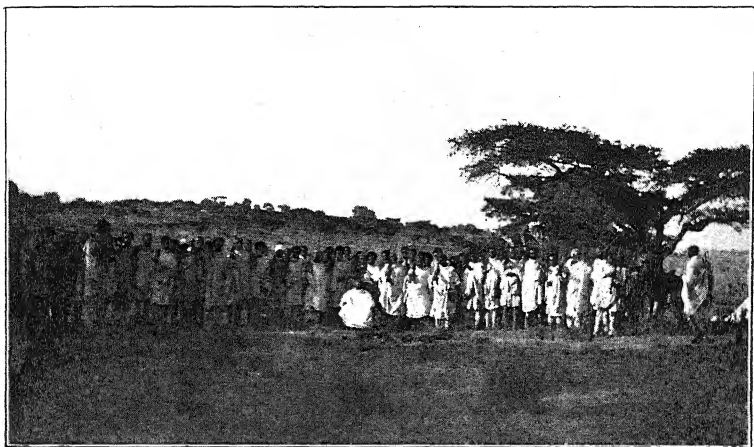
The country seemed to be well administered as far as one could see in passing through; the peasants are mainly Galla and do not differ markedly in feature from their brethren farther south. We found them courteous and helpful, much more so than the Galla in Shoa, nearer to the capital.

The people of Gudru have a curious tradition as to the origin of their race and the primitive seat of their forefathers. They say that their country lay far away to the south-east, beyond the kingdoms of Gurage and Gingiro, and on the opposite side of a *bahr* (which may mean sea or lake) which separated it from the land of the Christian Amharas.

They say they were then the rudest savages, without even clothing, without agriculture, without cattle, without even any sort of food except the fruit of trees and roots dug up with their hands.

A woman of the Christian Amharas sent across the *bahr* a boat, in which were bread, clothing, a spear, a shield, and other articles, the arrival of which novelties excited the wonder of the savages. They tasted the first, put on the second, and tried the use of the others, and, being pleased with them, they crossed the *bahr* with the intention of acquiring further supplies. By so doing they came in contact with the Amharas, with the inevitable result that quarrels and wars ensued; and, conquering their Christian opponents, they swept across the country, dividing the population into two parts, of which the one remains in the Abyssinia of the present day, while the other inhabits the countries farther to the south.

Soon after leaving Konbolcha a man rode into camp and told us that the Governor of Gudru, Dajazmach Achamelli,



Dajazmach Achamelli, Governor of Gudru, and some of his followers in our camp near Konbolcha.



Fitawrari Ayalu, in full war dress, with some of his men, on the edge of the Nile Valley.



had heard of our coming, and had had horsemen scouring the country for us, as he wished to greet us—he was apparently only a few miles off, marching towards us. And sure enough within an hour the Dajazmach descended upon us with a still more imposing retinue than that of our friend Desta, his two hundred Abyssinian riflemen, on horse and on foot, making a most warlike display in our camp, while the overlord of the province and his principal officers enjoyed the very limited hospitality we were able to offer them.

He was a big man, and, like most Abyssinians of his class, very courteous and possessed of much natural dignity. Even when his enormous curved sword got entangled in the intricacies of our camp chair, and in his efforts to extricate it the chair collapsed ignominiously, his composure was unruffled and unshaken.

He gave us the welcome news that a messenger had arrived across the Nile from Ras Hailu saying that he was waiting to welcome us in Gojam, and he introduced to us three of his Fitawraris—Ayalo, Worku, and Zelleka—to each of whom had been allotted a portion of the job of conveying us safely to and over the Nile.

And then consignments of presents began to arrive—an ox, sheep, goats, eggs, milk, bread, etc.—and although the Dajazmach left us reasonably early, his Fitawraris remained behind to superintend the delivery of *dergo*, which continued coming in until after 8 o'clock at night.

It may be mentioned here that the title of Fitawrari was originally a military one, more or less equivalent to that of general; literally it means "rhinoceros horn" and was customarily applied to the officer in command of the advance guard of an army. But it has now become more of an honorific distinction. Dajazmach is a higher title which means "general or keeper of the gate"; it was originally used to designate a governor of a province or general of an army; whilst the highest title of all is that of Ras, which means "head."

These people's generosity and politeness were astonishing.

and made us feel quite uncomfortable as we had nothing adequate to offer them in return. We could not even give them a square meal, as it was a fast-day on which they will not eat meat, eggs, milk, or butter ; they even asked us if the biscuits were made with milk or butter, and I had to produce water biscuits so as not to offend their susceptibilities. But, curiously enough, they will always eat fish on these occasions, so we invited them to a light supper of sardines, tinned fruit, tea, and biscuits. Their method of disposing of the fruit was quite interesting : their more favoured retainers stood behind their chairs, and one of the Fitawraris would occasionally turn round, deliver a slice of peach or pear into the hands of the favoured one, who, with a low bow, would stuff it down his throat with his fingers.

It was a strange dinner-party, lighted up by the camp-fires and the moonlight, and framed by the scores of warriors wrapped in their white robes, leaning on rifles and spears in silent contemplation of the white people's curious customs and belongings, while relays of peasants were depositing their contributions of foodstuffs under the supervision of our faithful cook who, despite the adage as to "looking a gift horse in the mouth," smelt the butter, scrutinised the milk, and put the eggs through an age-test—a proceeding which filled me with some dismay but which was accepted as a matter of course by the donors.

The next morning camp was a combination of a menagerie and a raw-meat larder. Animals of various kinds were tethered in all directions ; and, as our men could not possibly eat a whole ox at one sitting, they cut part of it into strips to dry in the sun, and quite soon hundreds of uninited guests in the shape of vultures, hawks, and crows were circling round overhead or squatting just out of stone-throwing range waiting for a chance bit to be shared with the half-wild dogs that seem to spring out of the earth wherever a morsel of food is to be had. And later on, at night, the jackals and hyenas would come for their share, making the night hideous with their complaints ; in the

morning peasants would collect any half-burned logs or empty tins, so that all traces of our passage would be effectively cleared up.

The dogs generally disappeared before dark, doubtless in order to get within the shelter of their lairs before the hyenas were abroad. But on this night one unfortunate animal, tempted no doubt by the lavish display of food, remained prowling around the camp until it was too late to get home safely. So, unbeknown to us, he had apparently secreted himself between the inner and the outer fly of our tent, and in the middle of the night I was awakened by the sound of an animal rubbing his way along the tent wall—it was obviously something fairly large, and the possibility of a leopard at once crossed my mind, an unpleasant opponent for a hand-to-hand scuffle in the dark. I got hold of my rifle and shouted for the "night-guards," who, after some investigation, reduced my leopard to a dog, and chased him away from the tent. The poor beast disappeared into the darkness, but from the unmistakable sounds that followed it was all too evident that he had not been able to escape the ring of hyenas that the smell of blood had attracted round the camp, and that these savage brutes had not been disappointed of a meal.

Needless to say, our men were exceedingly loth to leave this hospitable district, and on the next morning I was met with all sorts of excuses for prolonging our stay here, such as the necessity for rest and preparation before starting the arduous work of crossing the Nile Valley, rearrangement of mule-loads, and the doctoring of both men and animals. We turned a deaf ear to these blandishments, however, and insisted on an early start, after having given some of the men the most nauseous form of medicine we could find in order to discourage further unnecessary applications.

It is curious how easily these men succumb to illness, and how readily they give up hope and resign themselves to the worst. We had an interesting example of this on the next day; on reaching a pleasant spot where the caravan had



halted to readjust loads we found one of our men stretched on the ground covered with his *shamma*, and were told that he was very ill. We overhauled him as best we could, prodded and felt him, but could not discover anything much the matter with him beyond a certain amount of feverishness. Nevertheless, he told us that he was very ill and was going to die, and begged us to go on and leave him behind in the bush to die in peace.

Needless to say we told him not to be a fool, dismounted one of our other men who was entitled to ride a mule (much to his disgust, incidentally), mounted our wounded warrior, and told the others that if they did not bring him safely into camp that evening there would be trouble. On arrival we dosed him vigorously with a varied assortment of drugs, of which aspirin and quinine were the mildest, and sent him to bed. Just as we were turning in ourselves a deputation arrived at the tent headed by the cook (who, as the cutter-up of joints, was regarded as something of a surgeon) saying that the man was worse and asking us to come and cut out his uvula or his tonsils or some part of his throat—it was not quite clear which; failing this, they wanted to borrow our surgical scissors to do it themselves.

Our knowledge of medicine being strictly limited, and of surgery nil, we sternly refused to operate, and advised them to wait until the morning, by when we thought (or hoped) that some of the drugs with which we had filled up our patient would have produced an effect of some kind. Fortunately our views were adopted, and the next morning, when we went with some misgivings to inspect the man, we found him moving about quite cheerfully and apparently perfectly well. He said he thought our medicines were wonderful, but hastily declined the offer of any more.

I am bound to say that our own men always showed great faith in our medical efforts, even though we made no profession of being doctors; but it is not always so in Addis, the natives there very often preferring their own form of treatment to that of *bona fide* doctors, sometimes with disastrous

results. One of our friends was having a servant of his treated by a white doctor for lung trouble, and the man seemed to be getting on all right. But a friend who came to visit him evidently thought that progress was not sufficiently rapid, and induced the unhappy sufferer to drink a cupful of petrol or paraffin—I am not quite sure which. The wretched man, of course, became fearfully ill, throwing up blood and exhibiting other alarming symptoms, and I believe he eventually died.

On another occasion a European friend of ours was suffering from a severe bout of influenza, and his boy, who was much attached to him, having no faith in European doctors, departed in search of an Abyssinian practitioner, and, paying him several dollars out of his own pocket, induced him to carve a talismanic inscription of sorts on a special tree. As our friend recovered, the boy's faith in his own native remedies was of course more strongly established than ever.

They firmly believe in boiling up the liver of a mad dog and drinking the horrible concoction in order to cure rabies, and, as there was an epidemic of that unpleasant disease last year among the pariah dogs that assist in scavenging the town, the local practitioners must have driven a good business, although I could never discover how they managed to capture the mad dogs from which to obtain the medicine.

But, after all, is this any more surprising than the incredibly idiotic beliefs and superstitions current among Europeans enjoying (or suffering from) civilisation and education? In the poorer districts of London bead necklaces costing a penny each are worn as "charms" against colds and bronchitis, whilst in a fashionable shop in the West End costly "talisman" are sold to bring luck at cards and ward off disease. A distinguished professor recently condemned this sort of imbecility in strong terms at a meeting of the British Medical Association, but apparently it still flourishes in spite of the millions spent on education.

Our fame as doctors had evidently been spread abroad

by some of the patients we had treated, and we often had quite a large "panel" to attend to. Some of the cases were simple enough, but some were quite hopeless—the local *shum* or mayor, for example, wanted his eyes "made good," which nothing short of an operation for cataract could have effected; whilst an unfortunate priest explained with alarming and disconcerting wealth of detail that he had been suffering from dysentery for the last five years.

Our own men's troubles appeared to be due mainly to indulgence in the supply of *tej*, which our too hospitable hosts had, in spite of orders, smuggled into camp. *Tej* is a pleasant enough beverage, but it is distinctly potent—the native recipe for it runs as follows:

"When *tej* is made a horn or cup of honey is put in a large jar with 6 or 7 cups of water and stirred. The next day all the impurities and wax float on the top. The maker having taken out the impurities, and having slightly heated some *gesho* [*gesho* is an indigenous plant largely grown for this purpose], it goes into the mixture whilst hot and ferments all night. If it be in the highlands it is ready in 8 or 9 days, and if in the plains in 4 or 5 days."

As a matter of fact, it is quite good after it has been filtered and kept for some time, but when freshly made it is—to put it mildly—an acquired taste, especially as it is generally made with filthy water, and stirred up with none too clean hands; the "impurities" so lightly referred to above are apt to be too obvious to make it really attractive as a beverage in its early stages.

One polite person with whom we were partaking of refreshment insisted on pouring the *tej* from the flask into a cup through the *shamma* he was wearing at the time, but as this article of raiment had obviously served the same and other purposes before, it is at least open to doubt whether the process of filtration was really effective.

## CHAPTER XI

### CROSSING THE NILE VALLEY

ON the following morning we commenced our crossing of the Nile Valley, and made careful preparations for what we realised was likely to prove a fairly arduous undertaking. Mule-loads were packed and adjusted with extra care, animals amply fed and watered, spare provisions stowed away in handy pockets, and so in the early dawn we left our pleasant camp at Karsa and rode northwards.

Fitawrari Worku had come to see us off and wish us good luck ; I am bound to say, however, that he did not materially brighten up the proceedings, for he was looking extremely miserable (as Abyssinians do) in the cool morning air, and was, moreover, soaked to the skin by a shower that fell just before 6 a.m. The said shower, on the other hand, freshened up considerably a dull, dusty plain we had to cross soon after leaving camp, an uncommon feature in this generally delightful and picturesque province.

We were shortly afterwards met by the Governor's nephew, Fitawrari Ayalo, himself a Sub-Governor in these parts, accompanied by the usual following of variously armed men on foot, on ponies, and on mules, without which no Abyssinian of any consequence ever moves. Ayalo himself was riding his war-horse, and a very fine appearance he made amid his savage warriors, being a tall, well-built man with fine features, and a really good horseman. He piloted us through delightful wooded country, by patches of healthy-looking cultivation, across streams towards the edge of the ravine, and then quite suddenly through a break in the trees between a deep cut in the cliff our first view of the Valley of the Abbai burst on us.

Literally the picture almost took our breath away. Beautiful scenery I have seen, and magnificent ; but for sheer, rugged, awe-inspiring grandeur I have never seen anything to touch that morning's panorama. The huge chasm that is the Valley of the Abbai was indeed a stupendous sight—the great cliffs fell away from under our feet in broken, irregular waves of rock, down, down to what looked like a mass of tortured, twisted peaks and clefts and mounds till, nearly 4,000 feet below, they reached the river, still hidden from our eyes. And opposite us wall upon wall of rock rose out of the *débris* below till it ended in one towering cliff that swept the horizon from east to west, ruled in a straight line across the sky, broken only by the faint outline of the mountain-tops of Gojam far away in the distance. The early-morning sun, glinting along the valley, still partially veiled in thin mist, touched the rock walls with every shade of colour—pale mauves and inky blacks, yellows, greens, and reds, all faint and blending to form a wonderfully soft yet vivid colour-scheme that but enhanced the grandeur of the great hills.

We were at almost the most southerly point of the great southward bend of this most bending river, and in fancy we could see all its tortuous course spread out before us. The Blue Nile or the Abbai, "The Father of Waters," as it is poetically named by the Abyssinians, comes to life at the Sacred Springs, about one hundred miles south of Lake Tana, into and across which it runs, and then, emerging in a great waterfall (which an old Portuguese traveller described enthusiastically if inaccurately as 8,000 feet high !), sweeps in a tremendous curve southward and westward before making its last swerve right round to the north on its journey to join its still greater brother, the White Nile, just below Khartoum.

Technically the Blue Nile has been described as a "torrential river with a bed of shingle in a deep valley." To me that seems a painfully cold-blooded way of referring to a river about which so much romance has clung, and indeed

still clings ; and I can understand Bruce's feelings when, after innumerable difficulties, he reached his goal and, in the somewhat florid language characteristic of the man, wrote that " It is easier to guess than to describe the situation of my mind at that moment—standing in that spot which had baffled the genius, industry, and enquiry of both ancients and moderns for the course of near three thousand years."

Lucan credits the legendary Sosotris with the keenest desire to penetrate to it. Cambyzes made an ill-starred attempt to do so. Alexander the Great sent out an expedition for the purpose, as did the Ptolomies Philadelphus and Euergetes. Cæsar displayed great interest in the subject, and Nero sent two centurions to search for the head of the Nile.

But it remained inviolate until in the seventeenth century the Portuguese, and in the eighteenth century our great traveller James Bruce, reached the much-sought-for river-head. Even these discoverers fell into the error of thinking that they had found the source of the great Nile, and the Portuguese missionaries invested their accounts of the river with so much exaggeration and embroidery that Bruce was led to declare that they had never been to any sources at all.

Since those days a great deal has been learned of the river, but it has never been fully explored, and no one has ever descended its course, though an effort to do so was made some twenty-five years ago which ended in complete disaster after twenty-four hours. The adventurous party escaped from their sinking boats to the shore, and, while spending a miserable night on the rocky bank, were rudely disturbed by the yells of two of their men who were being dragged down into the water by crocodiles.

Indeed for three months of the year, during the period of the rains, it is impossible for man or beast to cross the swirling mass of waters, carrying down with it trees, rocks, and masses of the rich Abyssinian soil that helps to fertilise the Egyptian plains ; and then gradually the waters subside until it is possible by swimming, by fording, or, as we did,

by means of *jandis*, to cross from the southern portion of Abyssinia into Gojam.

While we were absorbed in drinking in the beauty and grandeur of the prospect, our good friend Fitawrari Ayalo was otherwise occupied. He had observed that we had been taking a number of photographs, and, like all Abyssinians, being very anxious to have a portrait of himself, he had despatched a horseman to his abode to bring out his full war regalia of lion's-maned collar and head-dress, embroidered cloak, embossed shield, and the war-trappings of his pony, in order to do justice to the occasion. His men formed a ring round him while he arrayed himself in his panoply, and, thus prepared, he invited us to immortalise him—the resulting picture was fortunately successful.

Greatly as we should have liked to spend a much longer time in the contemplation of the view, we were now compelled to turn our attention to the more material prospect of the remarkably stiff climb, down and up, that obviously faced us, and that seemed to promise some fairly strenuous work for the next day or two—the reality did not belie the promise.

After taking farewell of Ayalo, we abandoned our ponies for the time being in favour of mules with which he had provided us, and in the midst of a number of guides and other men whom he sent with us to help us we began the descent. Never before had we been thus shepherded, but in spite of it all the descent was a most arduous task, and I think I may without exaggeration describe it as almost terrific. Rocks, rocks, and more rocks; the path, little more than a goat-track in the dry weather and the bed of a torrent during the rains, consisted of great loose boulders and drops of two or three feet sheer. It twisted in and out amid very beautiful but extremely thorny vegetation, and at times we were riding with one leg brushing the wall of the cliff and the other hanging over the edge of a drop of some hundreds of feet. Soon we had to abandon our mules, and then we jumped, slithered, tobogganed, and fell downwards towards our goal, leaving our animals to be brought



**FITAWRARI AYALU**

Nephew of the Governor of Gudru. He is sub-governor of a district of Gudru bordering on the Nile Valley, and was of great help to us: he is arrayed in full gala dress of lion's mane head-dress and cape, etc., especially donned for the occasion.





along somehow. It was easier for our men, with their bare feet, but how the unfortunate ponies and pack-mules managed the descent I cannot imagine ; we did not care to watch, and left them to the muleteers, hoping for the best.

The bushes, creepers, and flowers through which we toiled were exceedingly beautiful ; among them we saw limes and other fruits growing wild, for as we dropped farther down the valley the temperature rose rapidly ; numbers of baboons scampered about around us, disturbed by the noise of our caravan ; and we passed a series of immense caves in which hundreds of men could be hidden, until recently the homes of the few remaining bands of *shiftas*, who are said to be still found hereabouts preying on the native caravans seeking to cross the river.

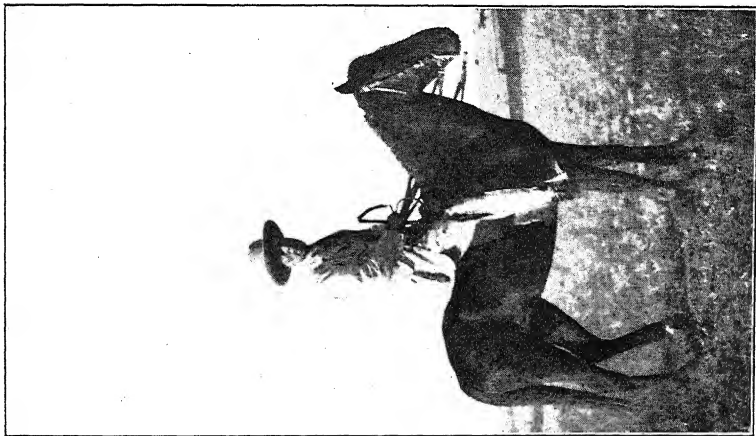
Early in the afternoon we dropped down into the village of Chara, where we were to rest and camp for the night, and exceedingly glad we were to reach it. The village is built out on a rocky shelf that projects into the valley, and as the platform is not very extensive the ingenious inhabitants had cut the hillside above into a succession of terraces that looked like a gigantic stairway up the cliff-side. On these terraces they grew their crops, and had constructed quite a good scheme of irrigation for the purpose.

We noticed another rather interesting feature of the place—a natural one, I think. Just above the village, jutting out from the face of the cliff, were some half-dozen immense rock pillars, nearly one hundred feet high, I should say, roughly square in shape, and looking as if they might have been carved out of the rock many centuries ago and had since lost much of the regularity of their shape owing to time and weather. I do not think, in point of fact, that they were due to the handiwork of man ; more probably this curious formation had been caused by weathering of the rock and water erosion, but unfortunately we had not time to make a proper examination of the place, which we could only have reached by climbing ; and we had had enough climbing for one day.

From the bluff where we camped we had a grand look-out up and down the valley, and as the sun dropped slowly to rest the colour effect among the jagged cliffs was superb ; here great crimson blotches lighted up a stretch of rock face, while there stretches of black shadow threw bits of the cliff-side into bold outline or veiled clefts in darkness. And softer shades of mauve spread over the valley until, with the abruptness peculiar to these latitudes, the sun dropped out of sight, and after a spell of soft, warm darkness moon and stars threw yet another form of light over the grand picture.

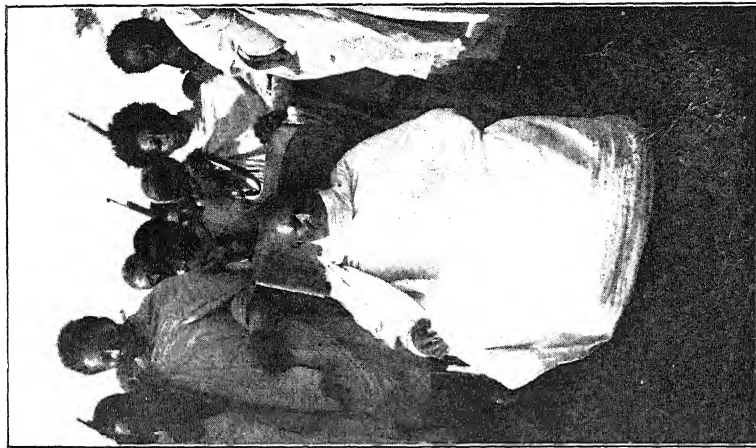
Our attention was distracted from our very beautiful surroundings by two extremely grimy-looking priests, who had come into camp with the request that they and their followers might be allowed to make the crossing into Gojam with us on the following morning, alleging that the imposing character of our party would safeguard them from the " dangers of the valley." The real reason was of course that they would thus be able to get over free of charge, and so, although we were not impressed by the appearance or manners of our fellow-travellers—they would persist in spitting about the camp until called to order—we could not refuse the desired permission. I may mention here that, although they appeared grateful at the time, they managed on the next day to get over the river among the first, and disappeared up the cliff-side without a word of thanks or even the most casual of good-byes—a lack of courtesy very rarely met with among Abyssinians.

Our camp was pitched on a sort of shingly beach in which each pebble was about as big as a man's head ; not the most comfortable resting-place in the world. But any shortcomings of the locality were amply atoned for by the courtesy and hospitality of the local Governor, who had been with Dajazmach Achamelli in Gudru and had been sent on ahead by him to make preparations for our passage of the river. Accompanied by a large retinue, of course, Fitawrari Zelleka, an imposing figure, unusually tall for an Abyssinian, came into camp bringing the usual gifts of food and drink,



THE AUTHOR

On a Gojam pony presented to him by Ras Hailu.



DAJAZMACH ACHAMELLI

Governor of Gudru. Behind him (right to left), three of his lieutenants who were of much help to us, Fitawraris Zelleka, Worku, and Ayahu.



and, better still, told us that everything was ready for to-morrow's adventure, and that an escort sent by Ras Hailu, the Governor of Gojam, was awaiting us on the north bank of the Abbai. So we turned into our sleeping-bags with minds at rest, and not even the thunderstorm that rolled and crashed amid the cliffs during the watches of the night could keep us from our hard-earned sleep.

Accompanied by Fitawrari Zelleka's men, who had taken the place of those sent down by our friend Ayalo, we were up and away before daybreak the next morning so as to try (vain hope) to get the crossing over before the heat of the day ; the ponies had been sent on ahead by a roundabout way in charge of a special party, as their descent presented peculiar difficulties. For nearly three hours we dropped ("dropped" expresses not inaptly our method of progression) towards the river ; the first part of the trek resembled the gymnastic performances of the previous day, but later on the going improved a good deal. The character of the vegetation changed entirely, the luxuriant growth of tree and bush giving place to stunted scrub, interspersed, much to our surprise, with a considerable amount of cotton cultivation—indeed cotton-bushes were the only form of cultivation we passed at all, though huts of the poorest description were scattered about fairly freely. Another unusual feature was the prevalence of a quantity of pink and white quartz formation among the dull grey limestone—an appearance which we did not meet with anywhere else.

Now we were approaching the river, and, whether it was to do honour to that historic stream or on account of the possible presence of disturbers of the peace, I cannot say, but the column was halted and marshalled into some sort of order, about twenty riflemen going on ahead as an advance guard, whilst others lined up beside us, and the remainder whipped up the stragglers and closed in behind.

And then at last quite suddenly, after a final precipitous drop of several hundred yards, we almost fell right on to the Blue Nile, and amid our long line of soldiers, servants,

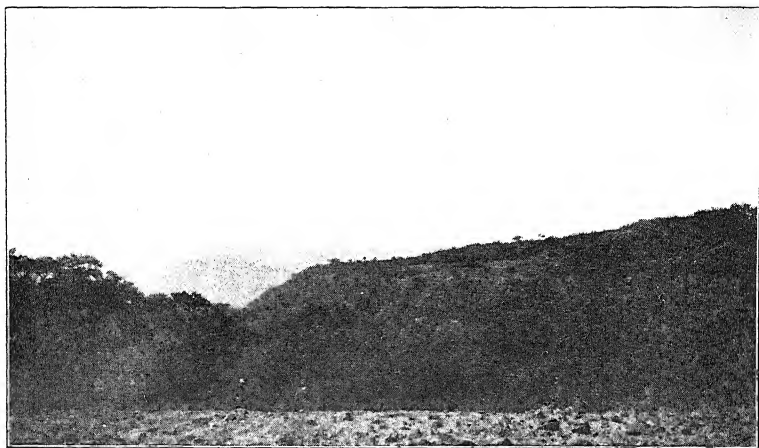
and villagers clambered down on the bank of the river itself.

It was an impressive moment when at last we stood by the waters of the Nile, and looked for the first time on this historical stream at a spot where we were assured no Europeans had yet crossed, Kital by name.

High above us on both sides towered the great cliffs, steep, grey, rocky banks covered with parched bush and scrub, rising almost perpendicularly from a stony beach, lined with huge boulders of grey rock. Between them ran the Nile, a clear greenish stream about a couple of hundred yards wide, the current running strongly, deep and silent, opposite us, whilst, some three hundred yards below, the waters of the river foamed and tumbled round a wide bend over a series of rapids into a deep pool.

It was a grim but fascinating spot, and from the human point of view the scene was extremely picturesque. Our little party, somewhat travel-stained and dilapidated, were gazing spellbound at the water; our men were as excited as ourselves, none of them having crossed here before, and few of them ever having seen the Nile at all; while the escort of the local Governor who had come down to see us off were leaning on their rifles making pleasant jests to our people as to the manners and customs of the crocodiles with which the river is infested.

Grouped naked on the rocks were some forty Galla swimmers, who had been summoned from their villages by the Governor to take us over; some of them indeed had been brought all the way from Gojam for the occasion; and away on the opposite bank, their white *shammas* standing out against the dark background of rock and scrub, waited the guides, officers, soldiers, and mules whom Ras Hailu of Gojam had sent for us, prominent among them being two brilliantly caparisoned mules, with scarlet saddle-cloths almost trailing on the ground, large silver collars, and embroidered bridles and head-stalls, destined to carry my wife and myself up the inaccessible-looking cliff on the other side of the river.



Looking across the valley of the Blue Nile, nearly 4,000 feet above our crossing place at Kital, on the way out. The escarpment of the opposite bank can be dimly seen in the distance.



#### GREETINGS FROM GOJAM PRIESTS

The priests standing at the back are carrying the drum, umbrellas, an Ikon, and a large cross. In front, clothed in sheepskins, are their pupils.





## CHAPTER XII

### CROSSING THE NILE VALLEY (*continued*)

AND now the crossing was to begin. Our men threw off their clothes and tied them into bundles, ponies and mules were unloaded and off-saddled, halters put on the ponies, and, amid much shouting on the part of the men and objection on the part of the animals, the first batch of our transport was urged into the river. Guided by the Galla swimmers, they walked outwards about fifty yards upstream, then, losing depth about ten or twelve yards out, they were headed straight across for the opposite bank amid a fusillade from the rifles to keep off the crocodiles. In a long, straggling line the men and animals strung out across the water, swept downstream for some two hundred yards by the fierce current before they could reach the other bank, and then we saw the line of heads rise out of the water and struggle upwards, one by one, as they touched bottom.

The most difficult to manage were the oxen, and one of them reached the shore upside down, his legs alone projecting from the water. He seemed little the worse for it, however, though I am bound to say that he kept as far away from the river as possible during the remainder of the day.

For an hour or more we watched ponies and mules, donkeys and oxen, struggling over, piloted, pushed, and dragged by those very wonderful Galla swimmers, who literally had sometimes to fight with the animals they were swimming over to keep them headed for the opposite bank and to prevent their being carried over the rapids. One mule indeed got drawn down; the swimmer stuck to him grandly, and they were both whirled through the falls into the pools beyond. We thought it was all over, and were

waiting to get a revengeful shot at the crocodile which we felt sure must be about to appear ; but by a great effort man and beast got a foothold on our side of the bank below the rapids and struggled out before the crocodile could get busy. It was a great joy to see them get out safely, and the excitement and yelling of the men was immense.

Meanwhile, men were busily engaged on the manufacture of the craft in which, or rather on which, we were to cross, namely the *jandis*. On seeing one of these for the first time—surely the most primitive form of boat in use to-day—I was reminded of the description given by one of the old Portuguese Jesuits nearly three hundred years ago of crossing the Abbai some way above where we were to do so. He says :

“ This is the passage over the Nile frequented by travellers who come from the Court and Province of Dambeha for the Kingdom of Gojama, the territory called Bed, the passage over in boats made of grosse and thick matte, strongly joyned and put together yet not secure from falling in pieces, which often happens and the passengers left in the water ; . . . Many swim over, so do all the beasts, and both man and beast go in danger of some mortall accident from the sea-horses and crocodiles, both bred in the Nile, and infesting the passages.”

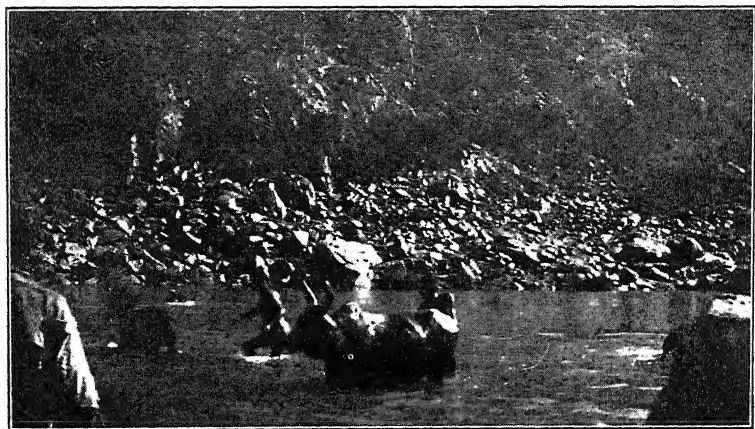
However, it was not as bad as that, and the *jandis* had evidently improved in the passage of the centuries.

The process of manufacture of these craft is simple, which is probably just as well, inasmuch as it has to be dismantled and re-made after each crossing. A large tanned ox-skin, with holes perforated all round the edges, is laid on the ground, dry grass is piled on it, and the whole then lashed into a sort of package by means of hide ropes passed through the holes round the edge of the skin. If goods are to be transported they are put inside ; if human beings they squat on the top *à la turque* or let their legs dangle in the



#### ON THE BLUE NILE

A "Jandi," an ox-hide stuffed with grass, seated on which we made the passage of the river, towed by swimmers, at Kital on our way out.



#### ON THE BLUE NILE

Our cattle and pack animals starting to swim over at Kital.



water ; in either case swimmers pull and push the unwieldy craft, which rocks and rolls like a Channel steamer on a bad day. It looks much more alarming than it in fact is, but I could not really blame some of our men who, after seeing the first *jandi* towed over, firmly declined to make the crossing, and had to be tied head to tail, three at a time, and stowed *inside* a *jandi* with the grass stuffing. How they escaped suffocation I cannot imagine ; they certainly seemed rather sad when we extracted them from their quarters on arrival at the opposite shore.

The great event of the day was the passage of my wife, for the men had been threatened with dire penalties if anything happened to her either by way of drowning or owing to the intervention of crocodiles. Fitawrari Zelleka and Gerazmach Desta personally saw to the manufacture of the *jandi*, rugs were piled on it to make it comfortable, and loops improvised to provide some sort of hold. A dozen swimmers towed the *jandi* up and out, another dozen pushed at the back, at least a dozen more swam all round, and then they struck out for the opposite bank, and were whirled along and across amid a babel of yelling and a regular crash of firing of rifles from both banks, every man who had anything to fire firing it, quite regardless of where the bullets were likely to drop. It seemed to me to be a case of " save us from our friends," for we appeared to be in much more danger of being shot than of being eaten.

There were two possible landing-places on the other bank, and of course they tried to make the first and best ; failing this, they shot for the second ; but if this were missed, the party would be carried over the rapids into the deep pool beyond, below which I was assured, with a wealth of circumstantial detail, was the luncheon rendezvous of all the crocodiles in the district.

So it was with some, perhaps pardonable, anxiety that I watched the passage of the navigating party and with some relief that I saw the *jandi* touch shore and a score of hands lift it bodily out of the water and carry my wife up to the

solitary patch of shade where Ras Hailu's envoy had been awaiting us.

When I myself crossed some time later I took over with me our *nagadi*'s small son, who was so terrified that he refused to cross otherwise than with me; he clutched me desperately the whole way over, and at every lurch his eyes seemed to come farther and farther out of his head; and when finally our boat's crew, possibly owing to the extra heavy load, missed the first landing-stage, and the *jandi* bumped out and spun round and round, the boy's expression was one of the most comical things I have ever seen.

A batch of extra swimmers jumped in and brought us safely to the second landing-stage, and the small boy shot off up the bank like a deer. Personally I regretted the shortness of the crossing, and had time and other circumstances allowed it would have been interesting to explore a stretch of this unknown bit of the river on the *jandi*; it would have been unsinkable until the grass got wet, though what would have happened then is not quite clear.

It was curious that at this time of year, the beginning of January, the very height of the dry season, there should have been so much water in the river and such a strong current running. And it was also curious that the water should have been so clean and clear, when one knows that it is this river which brings down to Egypt the silt that is her life-blood.

We noticed the same thing as regards the large tributaries of the Abbai that we crossed—the Gudir, the Chomoga, the Muga, and the Muger—namely, that there was plenty of water in them and that their water was quite clear.

The silt, it is obvious, must therefore come from the higher ground, and be carried into the main streams during the rainy season only. As to the amount of water in the river, its much greater volume at this place than at the ford we crossed rather higher up on our way back is clear proof of the size and importance of the intervening tributaries; and this is still further stressed by the fact recorded by Mr. Grabham that of the water passing Roseires only about a

quarter comes from Lake Tana in the dry season, and a very considerably smaller proportion in the rains, the great bulk being derived from the tributaries on the way down, and not, as might be imagined, from the overflow of the great lake.

We squatted down on the very hot rock in the solitary patch of shade I have already mentioned, and watched the remainder of our party and our goods and chattels being ferried over. Although very interesting to watch, it was a long business, for the entire caravan took five hours to cross; and, though there were a few narrow escapes, we got over without the loss of a single man, animal, or package.

But the atmosphere down at the bottom of the valley was stifling, and the sun beating down on the rocks made them so hot that it was literally painful to touch them with the bare hand; the cliffs, towering up above on either side, seemed to imprison us between them in a vast oven, so that our men, highlanders all, accustomed only to the bracing keenness of the Abyssinian plateaux, seemed to feel it more than we did and really to suffer.

It was accordingly amid general relief that at length the last pack was brought over and the last man and animal stood on the northern bank. The shore was littered with packs and bales, saddles and straps, all piled together in seemingly inextricable confusion, and much argument and recrimination took place between our people, the escort, and the swimmers as to the whereabouts of missing packages before things were finally sorted out.

Then at last we shouted our renewed farewells and thanks to our friends from Gudru on the opposite bank, and after a sketchy meal the mules were loaded up, the swimmers rewarded for their efforts, and the climb up the cliff started. For nearly three hours we toiled up a dreadful path with the sun beating down on our backs, and at long last, eleven hours after leaving our morning camp, we reached a half-dry river some 1,500 or 2,000 feet above the Nile, by the side of which we determined to camp. It was not altogether a



wise choice, for a storm was muttering away in the distance, and had it broken over us or higher up along the river's course it is probable that our camp would have been drowned out in the night. The rapidity with which a half-dry river will turn into a rushing torrent in this country is amazing ; I have known a case when a sudden storm in the hills caught a caravan in the act of crossing a river, and absolutely cut it in two ; the unhappy traveller was on one bank, his tent and kit on the other, while a raging stream, impassable for man or beast, bringing down logs, earth, and rocks, rolled between them, and torrents of rain soaked the party to the skin for half the night.

However, we were too tired to go farther, there was no other water within many miles, and so we decided to risk it ; our next idea was to absorb the lukewarm contents of our water-bottles, and while doing so we had another instance of the courtesy of our escort. The leader took off his *shamma* and with one of his men held it in front of us, so that none should see us drink. This custom has its origin in the superstition of the "evil eye," and persons of consequence, and even humbler folk, have a rooted objection to being looked at when eating or drinking, or, in the case of women, even when mounting their mules.

For two or more hours men and mules came straggling in, and it was not until after dark that the toll was complete, and by the merry camp-fires food and drink put new life into our somewhat wearied followers.

Although we had shed our Gudru escort, we were a fairly large party by this time, for, in addition to our own men, we had now got with us the escort sent by Ras Hailu, and another detachment of villagers and porters despatched to help us on our way up by the *shum* or mayor of a neighbouring village.

The interest displayed by these folk in the pitching of our tent, and the setting up of beds, mosquito nets, and collapsible tables and chairs was most amusing, though at times a little embarrassing, as, for example, when they

manifested a keen desire to see for themselves the use to which we were about to put our folding bath.

Difficult as the path up had been, it had been made infinitely easier for us by Ras Hailu, who had indeed spared no efforts to make "smooth the way." Over a hundred men had been engaged for days in moving rocks out of the track, bridging difficult places, cutting down trees and bushes, and generally turning the bed of a mountain torrent and a goat-track into a fairly passable path. Nevertheless, we were very glad to reach camp.

It may not be amiss if at this stage I say a word or two about the interesting tribe of Galla who had supplied the swimmers for our crossing.

They number in all some 3,000, and inhabit the lower slopes of the southern bank of the Nile for some little distance east and west of our crossing-place. Unlike most African tribes I have met, they grow no foodstuffs and keep no live-stock; the inhospitable soil on which they build their wretched huts, amid a few stunted bushes, produces only cotton, and they exist by raising this and exchanging it for the necessities of life with the inhabitants higher up the valley.

Incidentally I may mention that this cotton, though of poor quality, commands an absurdly high price in Abyssinia, whilst cotton of very much better quality grown in other parts of the country fetches a higher price than raw cotton at Liverpool. The reason is, I imagine, that very little is grown, and it is in great demand for making *shammas*, the toga-like garment which every Abyssinian man and woman wears or wants. Only the comparatively well-to-do can afford the home-made garment; the imported article is much cheaper, but does not get far afield from the main centres.

These Galla also derive a small revenue from their river-work at this and other crossings. The ox-skins used for making the *jandis* are dressed and prepared by them and belong to them, and they make what is for an Abyssinian

quite a large charge for ferrying over the goods and animals of any *nagadis* (native travelling merchants) who enter or leave Gojam by this route—i.e., one dollar for three mules, one dollar for three mule-loads, and a quarter of a dollar for each person. They are, however, obliged by the Governor as part of their taxation to carry over gratis any "great persons" (into which category we had fallen!), such as officials, local chiefs, and their followers, etc., and are also subjected by this official to what must be for them very heavy taxation.

I gathered that the tribe as a whole has to pay some \$1,500 a year to the local Governor, who remits it to the provincial Governor, who keeps it. And in addition they have individually to pay a number of other minor imposts to the local Governor, to his satellites, and to the local *shums* and *chika-shums* (mayors), to say nothing of "presents" in kind at Christmas and other feast-days.

I cannot therefore think that their lot can be a really very happy one, though I am bound to admit that the swimmers seemed a merry enough crowd, especially after a distribution of *largesse*; possibly the interest created by the first party of Europeans who had crossed by that way may have had something to do with it.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THROUGH GOJAM TO DEBRA MARKOS

THE place at which we had halted after climbing up from the Abbai was Sens, and, as is frequent in Abyssinia, the dried-up torrent in the bed of which lay our camp bore the same name. Fortunately, the threatened storm passed away without drowning us out, and on the next day, somewhat stiff and weary, we resumed our climb up the northern cliff of the river valley. Partly owing to the natural formation of this bank, and partly owing to Ras Hailu's road-making efforts, the climb-up, though sufficiently arduous, was not as strenuous as the drop on the other side had been, and the splendid mules which had been sent for us helped our progress materially.

The vegetation became more and more dense and luxuriant as we rose, and eventually we halted just below the top of the escarpment at a most delightful spot, Anjim by name. Here we camped to give our men a rest and a raw meat feast for their Christmas Day, while we received quantities of *dergo*, and doctored and repaired damages to men, animals, and gear caused by our last few days' efforts.

Our ponies had come through remarkably well, indeed they were in better condition than when we started, a fact which afforded us much satisfaction, as we had been assured that we should have great trouble with them, even if we got them through at all. Moreover, we had not lost a single mule, which was also very satisfactory, and a pleasant contrast to the experience of a recent expedition in which the travellers rather boasted as an example of expeditious travelling that they had killed twenty-five of their pack-animals en route. I am glad to say that we were able to

keep our record in this respect right up to our return to Addis.

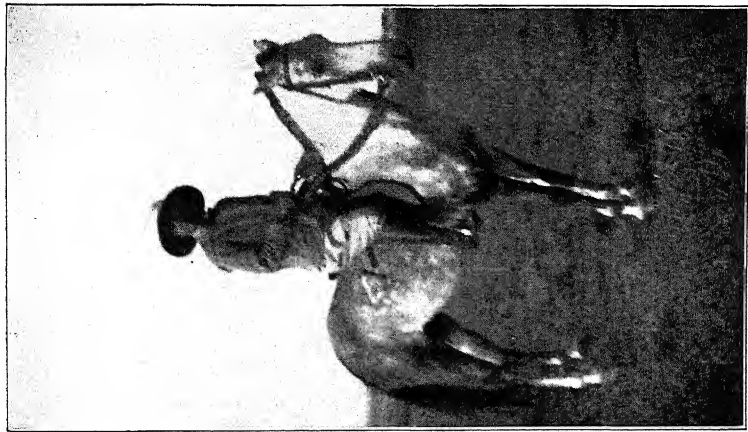
In Addis Ababa and other centres Christmas is quite a big feast, preceded by a long fast from 16th *hedar* to 28th *tahsas* (26th November to 6th January); it is known as Lidat (Lidatu means "the birth"), and Christmas Eve is called Gana. Last year they ushered in the day with a salute of field-guns at 6 a.m., and all day long there was beating of drums and making of music and feasting, including of course the inevitable *gebur* or raw meat banquet at the palace.

At Anjim we had to take leave of our good friend Gerazmach Desta, who had been sent with us by Dajazmach Achamelli, the Governor of Gudru, to see us safely through the Abbai Valley and over the river into Gojam. It is the custom to attach an officer to strangers and persons of distinction travelling through the country, and generally the man is an intolerable nuisance, causing far more trouble than anything else. The Gerazmach Desta was, fortunately for us, a most delightful old gentleman, and had enlivened the worst parts of the journey and the hottest parts of the day with a flow of conversation and jokes, at which, lest we should miss their point, he laughed loud and long himself.

He was a most energetic person, moreover, and had taken an active part in the river-crossing arrangements, running to and fro like a youngster in the effort to hasten the somewhat lengthy passage of our goods and chattels.

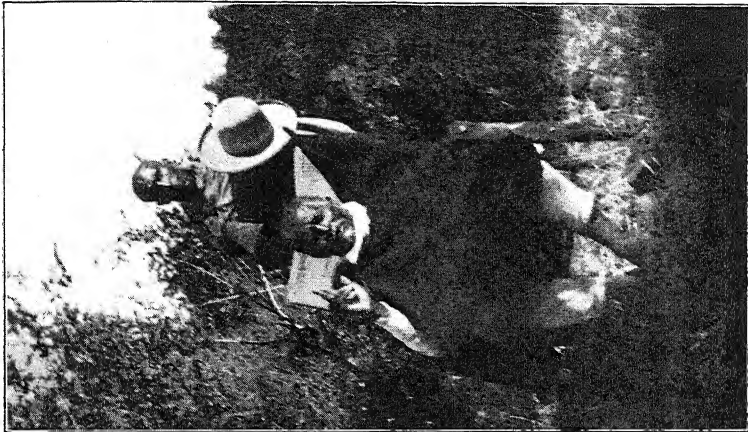
We were very sorry to lose him, and I think the feeling was mutual, for when we were taking a farewell photograph of him seated majestically in one of our camp chairs he lifted up his hand and gave us quite a pontifical blessing; he begged us earnestly to come back as soon as we could.

On the following day we topped the escarpment and got well into Gojam; here we were greeted by a deputation of priests from the neighbouring Church of the Virgin. There were priests, debtera, and neophytes, and they came to tell us that, having heard that strangers, "great personages,"



Mrs. Rey

On her grey mare after doing the journey out  
and nearly back.



GERAZMACH DESTA

Deputed by the Governor of Gudru to see us over  
the Blue Nile into Gojam, wishing us good-bye.



were coming from afar to visit their lord and master, Ras Hailu, they wished to welcome us to the country ; they produced some fine old rugs, which they spread out for us to sit on, and then they celebrated a sort of service, and gave an exhibition on a small scale of the " Dance of the Priests," of which I describe a more glorified edition later on, and so will only refer to briefly here.

They had brought with them from their church a sort of ikon, a highly coloured representation of the Virgin and Child, painted on wood, some of their great crosses, and a *negaret*, or long-shaped drum, and to the accompaniment of quite melodious chanting these very gorgeously arrayed ecclesiastics gave us a really remarkable performance. Some of the crosses they use show signs of quite good workmanship ; others are very rough. They are of all sizes, and are made of brass, of silver, of gold, or of a mixture of some or all of these metals. They obtain the brass by smelting old cartridge-cases, the silver by melting down dollars, and the gold is found in various parts of the country.

To their manifest pleasure and astonishment, we presented them with one of the yet uneaten oxen that had been given to us, and then cantered on through lovely country to find our camp pitched in one of the worst places I have struck. It was in an open plain near some evil-smelling half-dried marshes from which we had to draw our water, and as night fell a cold wind from the mountains seemed to cut right through us as we sat shivering over a miserable fire of dung-cakes, for no wood was to be had.

The hyenas' yelling seemed like a chorus of the damned, and, to add to our pleasures, our *nagadi* and our cook's boy proceeded to start an altercation which culminated in a battle royal. The wretched boy rushed up to the tent, and, pulling off his *shamma*, showed us his back, a mass of blood and bruises, announcing that he was going off to the village to induce the *shum* to arrest our *nagadi*.

This would of course have been disastrous, so I had to



insist on officiating as judge and jury, a rôle which necessitated my listening to an interminable rigmarole that appeared likely to last through the night, each man producing witnesses to prove that he was an injured saint and that the provocation originated entirely from the other, who was a son of darkness.

The infliction of a substantial fine on the *nagadi* seemed, however, to satisfy everyone. It may be mentioned incidentally that a fine so inflicted is not paid at the time; the individual fined has to produce two guarantors who go bail for the payment of the fine if and when required by the injured party: this would usually only occur if the offence were to be repeated. It seems to be a sort of binding-over to be of good behaviour, and, anyhow, it answered very well on the present occasion and we had no more trouble.

The interest of the next few days, however, obliterated the troubles of the preceding evening, and our further journey to Debra Markos became a sort of triumphal progress. Provisions reached us at every stage, and we were allowed to pay for nothing; as a matter of fact, it would have been difficult for us to do so, for the only currency valid here was one with which we were not provided, namely bars of salt. These bars are the length of a forearm, from elbow to wrist, and are about two or three inches square; five or six go to the dollar (2s.), according to the district. They are compressed very solidly, and are tied up lengthwise with grass, so they are not as brittle as might be expected; indeed I saw some later on that were almost black with handling. The great point is of course to keep them dry, and this in the rainy season must be no easy matter.

Rock-salt is found in Tigre, and has been distributed from there over the country since very early days; we met caravans laden with it later on, and Alvarez describes the same thing as being usual in 1527! He says that "the salt is of stone taken from the mountains, and it comes in the shape of bricks" (as it does to-day). The traveller Coffin described the great salt plain south-west of Amphila Bay

as taking five hours to cross; for about half a mile the incrustation was slippery and broke under the tread, but afterwards it was hard like a rough, irregular sheet of ice. On the west side the Abyssinians were cutting out the salt in pieces like a mower's whetstone; in some places it was as much as three feet deep.

A good deal of salt for edible purposes is now imported into Addis Ababa from the Jibuti salt deposits, and in recent years Zeila has also furnished supplies to Abyssinia in competition with Jibuti. There is, however, little doubt but that if the Abyssinian deposits were properly exploited they would meet the needs of the country; unfortunately, like so many other natural resources, they are but scratched on the surface.

The country near Debra Markos was well cultivated and well wooded; we passed numbers of clumps of the *chola* tree, some of them running to a good height and covered with quantities of a small dark green fruit about the size of a cherry. We were told that the children eat them, but their appearance was such that we felt we would not deprive the juvenile population of their enjoyment.

We skirted the line of the Chomoga River, a large stream running through a deep ravine from Debra Markos to the Abbai; along its western bank the mountains jut right out into the plain in a spur, and at the very end of this spur were two high, flat-topped peaks on the top of which we were told that Ras Hailu keeps his treasure. These peaks were referred to by the explorer Beke in 1841; he stated that they were then used as a State prison and also as a place of refuge in case of invasion, and were practically inaccessible.

These flat-topped mountains or *ambas* are a characteristic of Abyssinia; they rise almost perpendicularly from the surrounding plain to a flat summit of great extent. They are approachable by one or two narrow, precipitous goat tracks, and thus form natural strongholds which have from time immemorial been used as store-houses, prisons, or fortresses by the kings and chiefs of the country.

The members of the sovereign's family were until the nineteenth century all rigorously confined on such *ambas*, and Alvarez, the old Portuguese writer and traveller, who was in Abyssinia from 1520 to 1527, gives the most harrowing descriptions of their life there, where they suffered from hunger, cold, and every sort of privation; death was the penalty for any attempt to escape or to communicate with them, and indeed the lot of a member of the royal family seems to have been little better than that of a criminal.

According to Alvarez, it was revealed by angels to King Abraham (who lived in the fourth century) that all his sons should be shut up in a mountain, and that none should remain at liberty except the first-born, the heir. This was to be done for ever, to all the sons of the Emperor of the country and his successors, because otherwise "there would be great difficulty in the country, they would rise up and seize parts of it, and would not obey the heir and would kill him. He being frightened at such a revelation and reflecting where such a mountain could be found, it was again told him in revelation to order his country to be searched and to look at the highest mountains, and that mountain on which they saw wild goats on the rocks, looking as if they were going to fall below, was the mountain on which the princes were to be shut up."

King Abraham appears to have found the mountain, and Alvarez describes it as "a rock cut from the wall, straight from the top to the bottom; to a man going at the foot of it and looking upwards it seems that the sky rests upon it." Alvarez seems to have stumbled quite unawares on the path leading to one of the concealed entrances, and his attention was drawn to the fact by a shower of stones, "so many people throwing stones at us that they were near killing us." He took refuge for the night in the hut of one of the less bellicose of the guardians of the gate, who in the morning showed him the gate and told him pleasantly that if he had passed it there

would be nothing for it but to cut off his feet and hands and put out his eyes !

He naïvely adds that he and his companions at once mounted their mules and rode off in the opposite direction.

On one occasion a friar had managed to bring a letter from one of the princes confined in the mountain, and by way of reward he and the two hundred guardians of the gate were flogged in relays daily for a fortnight.

One young prince escaped and found his way to the house of the Empress, his mother, who was so terrified of the wrath of the Emperor, her own son, that she would not take the boy in ; he was handed over to his half-brother, who seems to have taken pity on him as he explained he had only run away from the mountain because he was dying of hunger there.

This barbarous and inhuman practice was still in force in Shoa when Major Harris penetrated into the country in 1841, and it is pleasant to read that when the King asked Major Harris on his departure what gift or favour he would like, the British envoy asked for and obtained the release of the unhappy individuals whose only crime was that they were the sons of their father.

It is amusing to compare these gruesome accounts of eye-witnesses with the fantastic story unfolded by Dr. Johnson in *Rasselas or the Happy Valley*, where the king's children are described as spending their days amid " the soft vicissitudes of pleasure and repose " in a place where " all the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded." It will be remembered that Rasselas and his sister, after escaping from the valley and wandering over the world, found so many drawbacks and disadvantages to life elsewhere that they made up their minds to return to prison.

On the occasion of the Falasha or Jewish revolution in the tenth century the whole of the royal princes and princesses then confined on the *amba* of Debra Damo were

murdered, with the exception of a single child who was carried off by loyal chieftains ; again in the sixteenth century the Muslims captured the royal *amba* of Geshen or Amara and killed every soul on it, taking away immense stores of wealth, the accumulated riches of the whole kingdom for many years past. Milton heard of this *amba* through Purchas, and had it in mind when he wrote in *Paradise Lost* :

Where Abassin kings their issue guard,  
Mount Amara (though this by some supposed  
True Paradise) under the Ethiop line  
By Nilus' head, enclosed with shining rock,  
A whole day's journey high.

I am bound to say that Ras Hailu's store-houses looked pretty well impregnable, even if not as high as Milton's description, and it is to be hoped that they will not suffer a fate similar to that of their forerunners.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ENTRY INTO DEBRA MARKOS

SOON after passing these mountains we topped a wooded rise and caught our first glimpse of Debra Markos far away on the top of a hill, which again was silhouetted against higher mountains still further off ; a sight which filled our men with excitement and inspired them with a lively desire to render themselves presentable before entering the town.

So that afternoon was devoted to the "vain adornment of the person," and camp was turned into a sort of laundry. We distributed bars of soap, and soon the ground was littered with *shammas*, shirts, and trousers washed to dazzling whiteness in the mountain stream and spread out in the sun to dry. Rifles were cleaned, accoutrements polished up, even the ponies received an extra grooming ; while the men ransacked their packages for clean belts and other trifles wherewith to adorn themselves for the great event of the morrow.

We had so far had nothing to complain of as regards our reception in Gojam, but the final stage of the proceedings put the rest in the shade and was really almost regal in its magnificence.

We had been jogging along during the morning through pleasantly undulating country and had crossed two tributaries of the Chomoga River, both running in deepish valleys, when just before noon we came to the crest of a hill, and, looking down into the little valley below, an astonishing sight met our eyes. A river was winding pleasantly round the foot of the hill about a quarter of a mile away, spanned by what seemed to us to be a real stone bridge ; on the other

side, right across the valley stretched a double line of soldiers, drawn up in really good order, all armed with rifles, their white *shammas* fluttering in the fresh breeze that blew from the mountains. Mules covered with bright-coloured trappings were being led up and down, and an individual, obviously the O.C. troops, arrayed in a very gorgeous blue cloak and a white helmet, was seated majestically in front of the party.

Directly we were seen a messenger rode up to us to say that this was a "guard of honour"—about five hundred strong—sent out by Ras Hailu to meet us, and that they awaited our pleasure. As the ceremony of reception promised to be a fairly long one, and as Debra Markos appeared to be yet some distance away, we thought it desirable to fortify ourselves with a meal, and, retiring behind some bushes, consumed a hasty lunch. Then we marshalled our small party in some sort of order, and majestically descended the hill-side towards the motionless groups of warriors.

In front rode our *baldarabba*, or introducer, resplendent in white *shamma* with a scarlet border a foot wide; then just ahead of us marched our eight *zabañas* with their rifles at the shoulder, having added white headbands to their usual attire. Behind us on the best of the mules rode our caravan leader and the head *nagadi*, followed by our two syces, spare ponies, and the long strung-out caravan of pack-mules with their attendants and some of Ras Hailu's people who had come down to the Nile to meet us.

So marshalled, we rode down the hill, and then to our further astonishment the long line of soldiers came to the salute, quite a creditable performance, and just as we got on to the bridge a band of native musicians started giving forth some rather marvellous sounds. Our ponies seemed pardonably surprised, and the results were almost disastrous, for no two instruments were played in the same time, tune, or key; but we were able to avoid the worst, and, after a somewhat spirited equestrian performance, managed to



Part of the escort of 500 soldiers sent to meet us by Ras Hailu of Gojam.



Gifts of food and livestock sent into camp at Debra Markos by Ras Hailu. On the left are the baskets plaited of coloured straw, full of native bread, carried on men's heads. The women on the right have "gombos" of *tej* and *talla* slung on their backs.





induce our ponies to ride along the line, and inspect the "guard of honour," feeling very royal.

We dismounted as soon as possible and had a few words with the very gorgeous gentleman in charge of the operations and his principal satellites, and then proceeded on the last stage of the ride to the capital. Three companies of about one hundred men each wheeled into column and started off; the musicians followed, then our little party, and finally two more companies of soldiery. There were three different bands, each performing on a different kind of instrument, and they played us right along into the town at a slow march, each band taking its turn to enliven the journey. It was really quite a thrilling sight as the long line of the procession wound up the hills and through the woods and across streams, the wild, barbaric strains of music echoing in the mountains, the blazing sun lighting up the flowing white dresses and the sparkling weapons, while the peasants through whose villages we passed stared in astonishment at the *Feringis* in whose honour this stage-picture had been framed. Up the last rise and over it into wide plains at the foot of the hills on which lies Debra Markos our little army marched until we reached a big *zareba*, outside which the troops formed in two long lines, and we passed through these, accompanied by the "massed bands," who declined firmly to leave us, into the demesne which had been built for us.

Hot and weary, but much enthused, we bade a temporary farewell to our escort, and, as I mentioned that I should like to have a photograph of them as a memento, they formed up into three sides of a hollow square, and I managed to get quite a good picture.

The dwelling-place which Ras Hailu had prepared for us was really sumptuous. A *zareba* of thornbush three hundred feet square, supported on posts driven deep into the ground, enclosed no fewer than six erections specially put up for our unworthy selves.

There were two large *tukuls* built of *chika* and thatched

with grass, the walls lined inside and out with hundreds of yards of white cotton *abugedid*, and decorated profusely with strings of flags, cut out of different-coloured paper; between the *tukuls* ran a path of native-made matting, on either side of which was a row of posts carrying more lines of paper flags. From them ran another path, also flanked with rows of flags, to our dining-room tent, a very gorgeous affair, circular in shape, about sixty feet round, and lined with picturesque Egyptian embroidery.

In another corner of the enclosure was a large ceremonial tent, divided into three so as to make a sort of ante-chamber at each end; whilst at the other extremity were two large black camel's-hair tents for our men and animals; in one of them we stabled our six ponies with ease.

The floors of our *tukuls* and living-huts were luxuriously carpeted with a profusion of Eastern rugs—Indian, Turkish, and Persian; whilst native-made *algas* (wooden-framed beds lashed along and across with strips of hide), pottery *gombos* (jars) and dishes, basket tables and receptacles had been provided in quantities. The *zareba* had been made, the huts built, the tents put up, and the equipment provided all especially for us, and, in fact, the finishing touches had only just been put to it all as we rode up.

But this was not all. We had just stretched ourselves out for a little much-needed rest when I was told that Ras Hailu's men had arrived bringing us "a little food." So out I went to meet a procession of some thirty or forty people bringing in provisions on a scale that put all previous efforts to shame. A couple of bulls, some sheep, many chickens, scores of eggs, and a couple of hundred flat loaves of native bread in coloured straw baskets formed the advance guard; there followed a dozen dishes of hot curried stuff, bundles of sugar-cane, a huge *gombo* of honey, another of milk, and another of butter, each weighing 10 or 15 lb.; dishes of tomatoes, lemons, and bananas; baskets of coffee and sugar; and, lest we should be thirsty, a dozen large *gombos* of *talla* (native beer) and *tej* (mead). Finally a

supply of long, yellow wax, native-made candles to throw light on the proceedings, and a few other unconsidered trifles, completed the tale of hospitality.

The faces of our followers during the arrival of these "light refreshments" were a study; they realised full well that the bulk of the victuals would find their way to them, and their joy knew no bounds. The only point of doubt in their minds was to whom the greater credit and meed of gratitude was due—to Ras Hailu, the princely donor of the supplies, or to ourselves, who had brought them there and enabled them to have the gifts.

And then, last but not least of the many interesting events of that most interesting day, amid a brilliant escort of chiefs and soldiery, Ras Hailu himself came to see us, and gave us the warmest of welcomes—"the end of a perfect day."

## CHAPTER XV

### GOJAM AND ITS RULER

GOJAM is one of the oldest and most interesting of the several ancient kingdoms which went to make up the Ethiopian Empire. The province and its rulers are mentioned in the old Abyssinian chronicles many centuries back, and it was quite wrongly considered by the Portuguese to be the so-called island of Meroe, which of course is no island at all, but that portion of the country lying between three rivers, i.e. the Atbara-Khartoum stretch of the White Nile, the Atbara, and the Blue Nile.

The misconception was doubtless due to the fact that Gojam is, like Meroe, very largely surrounded by water ; it lies within the great southerly bend of the Blue Nile, by which it is cut off on three sides, to which geographical isolation it owes in great measure the independence and semi-independence which it has enjoyed, and the important part it has played in the history of Abyssinia.

In the thirteenth century the ruler of the province was a *nagast* ; later on the titular representative of the king was known as *Rak-Masare* ; later on still one of the king's daughters held the province. In the fifteenth century the *nagast* seems to have been quite independent and to have paid no tribute to the king, but, when the Portuguese arrived at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the bulk of the province belonged to the celebrated and very forceful lady Queen Eleni, or Helena, the Queen-Mother.

It was immensely rich in gold in those days, and after Helena's death the story of the tribute that reached the king reads like a tale of the *Arabian Nights* ; it is said to have included *inter alia* three thousand mules, three thousand

horses, three thousand large fleecy cotton cloths, thirty thousand small cotton cloths, and thirty thousand ounces of gold ! I fear, however, that the old chronicler's enthusiasm may have outrun his veracity, and that a " nought " may have been added to each of the figures quoted.

In common with the rest of Abyssinia, Gojam was overrun by the Muslim invasion in the sixteenth century, and the enormously wealthy churches, some of them plated with gold, were sacked and pillaged ; the Governor was killed, and it was not for some years that it was wrested from the invaders, in a greatly impoverished condition.

The present ruler claims descent from the old Imperial family, and probably with justice. One of his ancestors of the same name, a Ras Hailu, figures prominently in the old chronicles as a great warrior in the early eighteenth century, and the story of his incessant battles and those of his descendants is continuous up to the present century. The chronicler says : " While at Nazaret Ras Hailu died suddenly, the nourisher of the whole world. And the Negus, hearing of this, wept with his whole army, and caused an effigy<sup>1</sup> to be made to be borne with banner and drums. Ras Hailu died a man of modesty towards both great and small, as the Bible says, ' Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.' " Incidentally the last mentioned epithet hardly seems to fit this most inveterate fighter !

His great-grandson was defeated and imprisoned until his death by Theodore, of Magdala fame, and the story of the ghastly butchery of seven thousand defenceless prisoners is one of the worst features of that demented monarch's reign.

The present Ras Hailu's father, Ras Adal, took the name of Takla Haymanot, the Abyssinian national saint, when he succeeded as ruler, and proclaimed himself as Negus or Emperor of Gojam. He also was a great fighter ; he fought

<sup>1</sup>In great State funerals an effigy of the defunct was constructed and borne in procession.

continuously with the Emperor John of Abyssinia ; and we passed over some of the battlefields, south and north of the Nile, where the two kings had contended, *inter alia* the plain of Ambabo, the scene of Takla Haymanot's defeat by John. Takla Haymanot extended his power far south of Gojam proper across the Nile, and we were shown there a town he had founded, Koa by name, and a church he had built to St. George, the patron saint of Abyssinia. His name is held in great veneration there to-day, and the memory of the successful wars he waged against the Dervishes on his western and northern fronts still lives in the minds of the people.

Although he was not successful in his wars against the Emperors John and Menelik, they were obliged to leave him in possession of his kingdom and to recognise him as king—the only one so recognised by Menelik. When Takla Haymanot died in 1901, Menelik seized the opportunity to divide up the kingdom, leaving only a small portion to the youngest of the three sons ; but this youth, being possessed of much ability, and strength of mind and character, successfully extended his heritage until it embraced practically its former area. Indeed it extends beyond these limits now, for in 1925 he was given the province of Ashifa, which stretches westward of Gojam towards the Sudan, a very material addition. Even when his fortunes were at a low ebb immediately after the death of his father his mind was filled with the idea of regaining control of the family dominions, and in the diary of the Duchesne Fournet mission, which was in Abyssinia in 1901–2 it is recorded how the young Dajazmach, as he was then, confided to M. Fournet the history of his father's strenuous life, and his own hopes and ambitions ; “ *il se flattait de recevoir du Negus le titre de Ras et le gouvernement de tout le Gojam.* ”

His aspirations have been realised, and he has risen to great heights : he married the niece of the Empress Taitu, Menelik's wife, and his daughter, Sabela Wangel, was at the age of fourteen married in 1910 to Lej Yasu, Menelik's grandson, who succeeded him as Emperor. Another of

his daughters married Dajazmach Takla Haymanot, son of Dajazmach Gabra Sellassie, Governor of Adowa and Axum, who accompanied Ras Tafari on his visit to Europe in 1924. This lady also arrived at Debra Markos while we were there.

Incidentally it is of interest to note that Ras Hailu's full name is Hailu Takla Haymanot, for, according to the somewhat curious Abyssinian practice, the son takes as his second name his father's first name. Thus Ras Tafari's father having been Ras Makonnen, the former's full name is Tafari Makonnen, whilst his son's full style and title will be Asfa Woosen Tafari.

It will have been noticed, from the way in which proper names are repeated, how poor is the language in nomenclature. In our caravan this time we had a Walda Maryam, Haile Maryam, Habta Maryam, and Gabre Maryam, and this at first was apt to be confusing. I found my wife very indignant one morning because, having (as she thought) called for the cook, no one appeared, a fact which was the less surprising when investigation revealed that she had in fact summoned *Klepto* Maryam, a slight on the honesty of the staff which was justly resented.

Ras Hailu's position, and the position of his country, are accordingly exceedingly strong, and he is a force to be reckoned with both by the present rulers of Abyssinia and by foreign Powers. He is an autocratic administrator—his people are obviously accustomed to obey him “at a run”—but he is none the less intensely popular in his country, partly owing to the hereditary feeling which is strong in Abyssinia, and partly owing to his own personality. When he was away in Europe accompanying the Regent on his tour a report was spread that he was dead, and so, when shortly afterwards he gave the lie to the rumour by reappearing in person, the reaction from the feeling of consternation that had been caused was intense, and he received a tremendous ovation on his return to Gojam. Over one thousand swimmers crossed the Abbai with him, and



offerings of every kind were brought to him—his people even brought flowers to throw on the path before him.

His province is well administered, and he is contemplating the execution of a number of enterprises which we should describe as “public works,” such as a large mill for crushing the grain used in Debra Markos, for which the water will have to be brought several miles.

He is a keen trader, and goes in for trade himself on quite a large scale: he encourages trade in his district, though very wisely will not allow Greeks and Armenians to come in and rob himself and his people. In Addis Ababa he has bought a lot of property, which he “lets” as shops, stores, and a hotel; he also imported into Addis a number of motor-cars, which his agent lets out on hire for his account.

On the other hand he cannot understand any Government *paying* people to work for them—in his view the peasants should do any work he wants in part return for the privilege of being governed and protected by him. For example, when I was thanking him for having built the *zareba*, huts, etc., for us, he replied, “Oh, that is nothing. I chose the place, told some people what I wanted done, and when it was done I gave them something to eat.”

Here again one sees the extraordinary combination and contrast of the ancient feudalistic frame of mind and the modern commercialism which helps to make these people such a remarkably interesting subject of study.

Ras Hailu does not believe in the practice of cutting off the hands and/or feet of malefactors—not so much from a humanitarian point of view, but from the standpoint of sound common-sense. “What is the good of cutting off their limbs?” he said to me. “They are merely rendered useless by so doing. When I catch malefactors I make them work for some years on anything I want done, and in that way they pay for their crimes and are of use to the Government.”

The Emperor Menelik’s view of mutilation as a punishment for theft was rather different, but quite as interesting.



OUR HOST

Ras Hailu, ruler of Gojam, and his daughter Wayzaro Sabela Wangel, former wife of Lej Yasu, ex-Emperor of Abyssinia.



In conversation with the French traveller Monsieur Hughes Le Roux, he said, " Why could you wish me to build prisons and let honest men wait upon criminals ? When the amputation of a hand or a foot has healed I let the criminals go on their way. They are henceforth reduced to living on public charity. The sight of them is a great example."

Gojam differs markedly from other provinces I have visited, such as, for example, Shoa or Arussi. Arussi is a purely Galla province conquered in the time of Menelik, and practically the only Abyssinians to be found there are the soldiers and officials attached to the governors and sub-governors. In Shoa is a mixed population where Abyssinians and Galla have intermingled a great deal by marriage ; in and near the capital indeed it would be difficult to find many people who have not got a strain of both bloods in them, from one side or the other.

Gojam, on the other hand, is a more purely Abyssinian country, the great Galla invasion of the fifteenth century from the south having apparently been checked to some extent by the Blue Nile and spread East and West. It is true that they did cross the river, and especially into Damot, but they seem to have been either driven out again later on or more completely submerged by the Abyssinian population than elsewhere.

The result is very marked ; for one thing, the population is almost entirely Christian, and very proud indeed they are of the fact. They pointed out to us after crossing the Abbai that now we should meet no Galla, no " pagans and heathens," but only real Abyssinians, and our experience bore this out. Moreover, the first thing that struck us on coming into the country was the very large number of churches, far more than in other parts of the country we had visited : in one spot I counted within sight ten of these buildings dotted about on neighbouring eminences, each in its grove of trees, and each attended to by a large number of priests and debtera, living in *tukuls* round about the church.

There are two other interesting points worthy of notice in regard to the peoples of the peninsula of Gojam, using the name in its geographical sense. To the west are still to be found a tribe known as Agaws, speaking a dialect of their own which was formerly current throughout the greater part of the peninsula, and forming a branch of what are probably the earliest inhabitants of Abyssinia, namely the Cushite branch of the Hamitic race which invaded Abyssinia possibly about 5,000 B.C.

They are referred to in the old Adulis inscriptions, and the Kings of Axum are said to have sent expeditions into their territory to search for gold ; they were probably only converted to Christianity at a very much later date than the rest of the country (though they indignantly denied this when asked by Dr. Beke), for the early Portuguese writers refer to them as pagans much given to fetishism, worshipping and sacrificing to rivers and trees.

The district in which they are now found includes the sources of the Blue Nile, about one hundred miles south of Lake Tana, and the ceremonies still practised here on special occasions are probably the remains of the old Agaw form of worship.

There is another branch of the Agaws living in Lasta, but the dialect they speak is a different one, although the Gojam Agaws claim that they originated from Lasta, which is quite possible if they emigrated in the first place from Canaan, as Bruce supposes, long before the later Semitic invasions from Arabia.

They appear, moreover, to be the peoples of Abyssinia bearing the nearest resemblance to those of Upper Egypt and the Meroitic kingdoms.

The other point of interest is that in the eastern part of Gojam just west of the Abbai, on its stretch running southwards, a considerable number of the Portuguese settlers received grants of land, married, and settled down there ; and when Dr. Beke was in that part of the country many of the inhabitants claimed descent from them.

Another marked difference between Gojam and the other provinces of Abyssinia referred to was the nature of the cultivation. The population being Abyssinian, they are themselves the farmers, peasants, and cultivators, instead of, as in Arussi and other Galla districts, being merely the overlords of the *gabars* or serfs who till the land. These latter are treated pretty badly and have to pay heavy taxes in kind, so that their object is, not unnaturally, to produce little more than is actually required to feed themselves and pay their masters—and it is inadvisable for them to make any show of prosperity.

This state of affairs does not obtain in Gojam, and the country which we saw consequently looks better cultivated, better kept, and more prosperous than in the other districts to which I have referred : even the cattle are larger than in the south.

The climate is rather milder than that south of the Abbai, though Markos lies at nearly the same height (about 8,000 feet above sea-level) as Addis Ababa, and the rainfall is not strictly confined to the rainy season, as it is—or used to be—in the south. This may also help to account for the greater productiveness of the country. In comparing Gojam with, for example, Tigre, the explorer Dr. Beke says that “The grand cause of the superiority of the peninsula of Gojam appears to be that the elevated mountains in the centre of it collect the waters of the heavens more or less at all seasons of the year, so that the numerous rivers descending from them, although they decrease considerably in the dry season, are never quite dry.”

There is much cultivation of a varied character in the districts through which we passed, and the market which is held twice a week at Debra Markos gives one a good idea of the variety of produce which is raised.

When we visited it, however, the market people seemed even more interested in us than we were in them. All business was suspended and a general rush to get a “close-up” view of the *feringi* woman took place ; our ponies were

nearly pushed over by the laughing, curious, and chattering crowd. Fortunately I had given leave to most of our men to go off and buy things in the market, and as soon as I could collect them they formed a sort of escort round us which enabled us to see something of the place.

There were separate portions for ponies, mules, donkeys, and cattle; for grain of every kind, barley, *teff* (white and brown), oil seed, and many other grains; for *berberi* (red pepper), black pepper, salt in bars both white and black, worth here six bars for a dollar, about  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  a bar; cotton roughly ginned and cleaned, about  $6\frac{1}{2}d.$  a lb.; cotton *shammas* \$2 and \$3 (4s. 6d. to 6s. 6d.) each, woven by the natives themselves from their own raw produce, some of them very fine and soft indeed; silver necklaces and other ornaments; and a variety of other odds and ends.

But we could not see as much as we should have liked, for in spite of the vigorous efforts of our men we got hemmed in by the ever-increasing crowds so that progress became impossible, and we had to struggle out homewards. They were pleasant folk in spite of it all, and had they only been addicted to a more liberal use of soap and water we might perhaps have stuck it out longer than we did.

Debra Markos itself is not a very striking-looking town. Like all Abyssinian towns and villages, it is built on a hill, or rather on the slope of several hills, and, apart from the Ras Gebbi, or palace (surrounded by high walls), and Aderash, or dining-hall, where as many as 3,000 guests can be seated, the place consists of grass-roofed, mud-walled *tukuls*; but it is prettily situated amid trees, and straggles out over some miles of country. Judging from the crowds assembled for the great feasts which are described elsewhere, I should estimate the population at from 10,000 to 15,000.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MEDIÆVAL CEREMONIES IN DEBRA MARKOS

WE were finishing a late and leisurely breakfast on the morning after our arrival at Markos, comfortable in the anticipation of a much needed day of rest, when breathless messengers arrived at our tent to tell us that a great ceremony was about to take place at the church, that the Ras was expecting us there, and that an escort of soldiers was now on the way to take us along. So rapidly the least dirty of our clothes were hunted out, ponies were groomed and saddled, and we rode out of our *zareba* to find our private army of yesterday drawn up in array and patiently awaiting us. There were the same five companies of "foot guards" and the three "bands," and to the accompaniment of the now familiar strains of music we rode off amid our gallant five hundred up the hills towards the church.

We discovered en route that the feasting was in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of the Negus Takla Haymanot, Ras Hailu's father, who had died in 1901 and was buried in the church of Markos here; there was to be a great religious ceremony, followed by a *gebur*, or raw meat banquet, to several thousand people.

As we got near the church we found the road lined with troops—there must have been between 1,000 and 1,500—all armed with rifles and arrayed in their freshly washed white *shammas*, which make a most picturesque dress: as we passed they saluted in their own fashion, a sort of graceful bow—a rather unexpected effort coming from lines of riflemen.

Inside the church enclosures were hundreds and hundreds of people—officials, priests, soldiers, and others. Ras

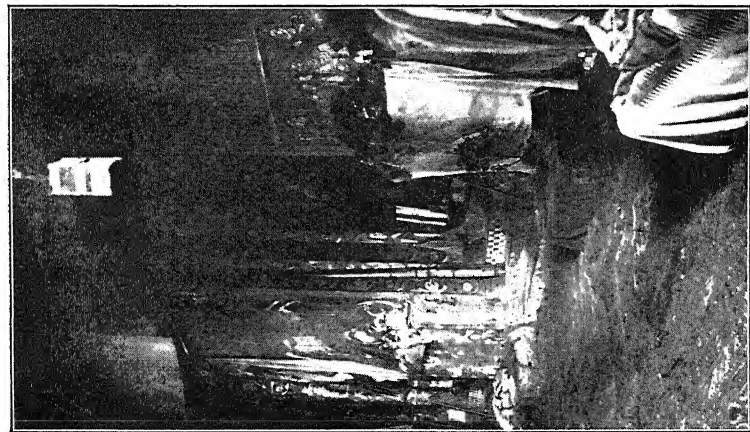


Hailu came to meet us, and led us through all these throngs into the church, where we stood before the central altar whilst chairs were brought for us ; inside this place is the Holy of Holies, where the Tabot or Ark is kept containing the Tables of the Law. The whole of the wall we were facing was covered with brilliantly coloured paintings in the Abyssinian style, and on two large shelves on either side of the central opening (there were three doorways) were arranged the remarkable silver and silver-gilt headdresses of the priests.

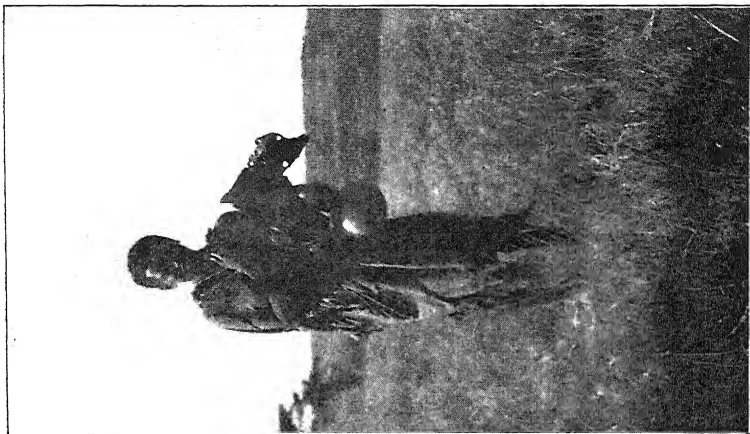
Then out from the central doorway came the priests and debtera in their wonderfully coloured robes, while from the outer gallery sounded the deep booming of the *negarets*, or big drums, and the chanting began. After a little while one of the priests brought up a gilt cross, with which he touched the Ras on the forehead and then gave him to kiss ; he did the same to us, but to no one else. We were indeed all through treated as the most honoured guests, and it was a marked privilege to be allowed to attend the function, especially in the case of my wife, for Abyssinians do not like women in their churches, even of their own race. In the case of some of the churches no female, human or animal, is allowed to approach anywhere near the building, and a man would not be allowed to ride a mare or a she-mule within several hundred yards.

After some more ceremonial we all trooped out of the church—many hundreds—chairs were placed on carpets for the three of us, the priests grouped themselves in front, and hundreds of soldiers ringed us all in. The strange service now went on, more chanting and drumming, and then a very long passage was read from a book in which I caught frequent references to Negus Takla Haymanot and other historical personages, so it could not have been the Bible, and yet they brought it to the Ras to kiss.

Then, led by Ras Hailu and our two selves, the whole huge throng circled the church three times at a foot pace, very slowly, while the priests' really admirable chanting



THE CHURCH OF MARKOS, IN DEBRA MARKOS  
The inner gallery of the church ; in the centre  
steps lead up between the altars into the Holy of  
Holies where rests the "Tabot" or Ark of the  
Covenant.



A PEASANT WOMAN OF GOJAM  
Who refused a silver coin we offered her as she  
only knew salt as currency.



and the measured throb of the big drums seemed to string up one's nerves to quite a high pitch of tension—which, added to the blazing sun on one's head, the airlessness in the midst of such a vast crowd, and the dust raised by so many feet, induced a feeling of sensible relief when the end of the third lap was reached.

We were not able at the time to make any close examination of the church itself—there was too much else to fill our minds and claim our attention—but a few days later I spent a long time in it with some priests and found it full of interest. Like all Abyssinian churches, it stands on a hill amid a grove of trees, which incidentally made it impossible to obtain a comprehensive photograph of the outside. It is round, and of course divided into three parts, the two inner divisions being square. The walls and ceiling are covered, every inch, with Abyssinian paintings depicting every kind of scene from biblical history, some of them distinctly lurid, notably a very realistic and gruesome representation of the massacre of the innocents, decapitated bodies of children lying in pools of gore in all directions. Other more modern efforts illustrated happenings in the life of Takla Haymanot, and several portraits of this King and of Ras Hailu were hung on pillars. Fine old rugs covered the floor, but one extraordinarily incongruous item in the midst of this mediæval splendour was a modern brass bedstead, which must have been transported there with some difficulty, and was used as a sort of couch of honour.

The central portion is again divided into three, the altar on the left being that of Saint Mark (Markos), to whom the church is dedicated, the centre one that of the Trinity, and the right-hand one that of the Virgin, each section being covered with appropriate paintings.

Behind a sealed door to the left of the three altars or chapels leading to the Holy of Holies are the tombs and remains of the Negus Takla Haymanot and of the Abuna (Archbishop) Lukas, the head of the Ethiopian Church then

attached to Gojam. At that time the three rival Kings in Abyssinia, Haymanot of Gojam, John the Emperor, and Menelik of Shoa, each had their own Abuna, each claiming that their man was *the* Abuna. Both Lukas and Petros (who was with the Emperor) have been dead a long while, and Matewos (Menelik's candidate), whom we knew very well in Addis Ababa, lived to be the only Abuna of Abyssinia, and died only a few months ago.

After the ceremony was over we once more got on our ponies amid a huge crowd, and, with Ras Hailu, rode on to his great banqueting-hall, where the *gebur* was to take place. The approaches were lined with soldiers and with the hungry and expectant crowds, through whose ranks we passed into the great empty place, where we were shown huge cauldrons full of *tej* and *talla* and hundreds of tables laid out with masses of the flat slabs of *injera*, or native bread.

The Ras's government being a feudal despotism, he maintains the old-time traditional hospitality, feeding at his table large numbers of the people, and on Sundays and feast-days, such as the present occasion, entertaining at the *geburs* anything from one thousand to three thousand people.

He took his seat *à la turque* on a large raised divan at one end of the hall, above which was a canopy and round it curtains looped back; next to him my wife and I had a little table to ourselves, from where we had a splendid view of the most interesting display that followed.

Attendants went round the hall dipping the slabs of bread with their hands into basins of red-pepper sauce, and then white cotton curtains were drawn across the upper part of the hall where we sat, and they began to feed us. Slabs of native bread, and a large and varied assortment of little cups of all kinds of compounds started the ball. We tore off bits of the bread, wrapped them round these, to us, unknown concoctions with our fingers, and swallowed them, hoping for the best. Some of the peppery compounds seemed red-hot; we were given milk curds to eat after these, and this had a wonderfully cooling effect on our parched

tongues. It is hardly surprising that we found them hot to the palate, for a native recipe for their favourite sauce is as follows :

“ Seven measures of raw red pepper-pods give one measure of powdered red pepper. Having plucked off the ends of the pepper-pods, the maker pounds it a little in a mortar and then must take it out. Then, having added a handful of basobila, ginger, garlic, and onions, he must pound again, dry it properly in the sun for two or three days, then add black pepper, cumin, cinnamon, cloves, ginger again, black and white azmud, cardomans, coriander, tosin, cabbage-seed, turmeric, and salt. It should be powdered, kneaded with water and vinegar, put in a clean vessel with the top plastered up so that it may ferment.”

There are other naïve directions, such as that the onions “ are to be roasted until they resemble the colour of a black-beetle,” and the recipe concludes with the statement that “ the powdered red pepper is one measure, and when the other spices are added altogether they will make two measures.” Fifty per cent. red pepper! English housewives, please copy.

After these preliminaries large joints of raw meat were carried in and shown to the Ras for his inspection and approval, and some small pieces cut off for us. As the meat comes really “ hot from the cow,” the animal having as a rule been only just killed, it is quite tender. I had eaten it before, and find the taste quite agreeable, though a little unusual, but one cannot eat much of it, and a few little bits were slightly—very slightly—grilled for our special benefit.

The native *tej* or mead is, however, quite a good drink, and libations of this saved the situation for us.

By this time the curtained-off part of the hall where we sat had filled up with chiefs and officers and the more important people, the curtains had been drawn back, and we could see the main body of the diners, who had got on to the raw meat stage. Unlike the *geburs* at which we had assisted at Addis Ababa, where enormous joints were carried round slung on

poles and every man cut off his own portion, here large lumps were passed round in baskets, and each diner chose his lump, about the size of half a leg of mutton. Bundles of ivory-handled knives were distributed, and with these and "nature's forks" they got to work as we had done, and one would really have thought that they had not had a meal for weeks.

Priests had been swinging incense-burners from the commencement of the banquet, walking slowly up and down the hall until it was too crowded to move, and this relieved the somewhat foetid atmosphere compounded of sour *teff* bread, beer, *tej*, raw meat and 1,500 to 2,000 super-heated humans. For now the whole hall was full, *tej* and *talla* were flowing freely, and people were getting "conversational," and, to complete the mediæval effect, stray minstrels dotted about the hall sang songs of praise to the donor of the feast and his ancestors, accompanying themselves on weird instruments, consisting of a single string stretched along a handle over a sheepskin-covered, hollow frame. All the time two unfortunate men had been standing in front of the Ras, each holding a large seven-branch gilt candelabra with all the candles lighted, long yellow candles made of native wax which gave quite a large flame.

It was an astonishing and fascinating spectacle.

An enormous sort of pie was now carried in on the shoulders of several men covered with what looked like pastry, and I was irresistibly reminded of the old nursery rhyme about "Four and twenty black birds baked in a pie" when I saw the Ras dive his hand into it and produce a number of whole chickens and unlimited hard-boiled eggs.

Our capacity of absorption was by now being severely strained; fortunately we found an ally in the person of a small slave-child about the height of our table. He was eyeing our multifarious delicacies with interest, and we hit on the plan of passing to him surreptitiously some of our "surplus stores." The plan met with immediate success; he swallowed everything we passed on and looked for more,

until at last we stopped lest the child, who seemed to be swelling visibly, should burst. But a moment later one of the attendants brought round a dish of fragments of meat and bread and handed it to our human waste-paper basket, who to our astonishment proceeded to clear the dish as though it was his first meal of the day.

We were indeed envious, for we had had some difficulty in consuming as much as we had, and had only been successful thus far by assisting the passage of the victuals by much alcoholic beverage. This, however, could clearly not go on indefinitely, and I whispered to my wife that I was almost at the end of my tether. "For goodness sake be careful," came the reply; "*one* of us must be sober."

Our difficulties were now, however, increased. A long table was brought and placed below the Ras, the diners being unceremoniously cleared out of the way for the purpose, and on this table were ranged scores of bottles of the extremely fiery native spirit *araki*, which by some mysterious process had been given a variety of colours—it is generally quite colourless.

While this seemed undoubtedly to appeal to the guests, we felt that the psychological moment for retreat had arrived, and so, after some three hours of banqueting, we sought and obtained leave to depart on the plea of fatigue due to our long journey. The change from the stifling heat and semi-darkness of the banqueting-hall to the heavenly fresh air and gorgeous sunlight of the outside world was rather bewildering, and I trust that we mounted our ponies with fitting dignity in the midst of the large crowds assembled outside the gates.

It was a relief to get back to our camp and wash away the effects of the festivity with tea and baths; and then we had to come out again to receive another long procession of people bringing more *dergo*. I may say here that these prodigious supplies of foodstuffs arrived every day during the whole of our stay, and that as a result camp became more like a travelling circus than ever, indeed, almost



unbearable. In addition to the ponies, mules, and donkeys—oxen, sheep, goats, and chickens thronged the space between the tents, and the place was perpetually garlanded with festoons of raw meat hung up in the air to dry. The hawks, crows, and vultures kept swooping down to pick up the tempting morsels of red flesh, which were only preserved by a clever device of our men, who twisted twigs into the supporting ropes, and these, standing up above the meat, acted as a most effective safeguard.

But it did not keep the brutes away from us, and one morning, while we were sitting at breakfast, a hawk doubtless imagining that the piece of ham I was eating was raw meat, dived for it, snatched it off my plate, and carried it off in triumph, nearly knocking off my hat with its great wings. It was interesting to watch them when they did succeed in getting anything; they picked it up in their claws, and, holding it as they flew, bent down their beaks and nibbled bits on the wing.

## CHAPTER XVII

### MEDIÆVAL CEREMONIES IN DEBRA MARKOS (*continued*)

RAS HAILU had sent specially to summon his daughter, the Wayzaro Sabela Wangel, to come into Debra Markos from her place outside in order to meet us, and on the day after the celebrations described in the previous chapter we had an interesting and pleasant lunch *à quatre*.

The Wayzaro is pretty and attractive, about thirty years old, and as the ex-wife of Lej Yasu, the former Emperor, was of course Empress of Abyssinia, although neither she nor her husband seem ever to have been formally crowned.

She was immensely interested in my wife, and insisted on feeding her with her own hands—needless to say, our lunch was eaten with our fingers, *à l'Abyssine*.

In all Abyssinia Ras Tafari is probably the only person of note who in the seclusion of his own hearth habitually lives and eats in a European way. Up to quite recently the Empress, when attending the great *geburs*, ate behind curtains on the platform at the end of the hall on which, at a separate table, the few Europeans privileged to be present had their meal. And it is not so very long ago that the Empress not only ate behind curtains, but was fed by her attendants, it being considered beneath her dignity to put food into her mouth with her own hands.

Ras Hailu's *gebbi* was by no means worthy of his state—indeed, for a man of his position, power, and wealth, it was astonishingly poor, and I was not surprised to hear that he was building himself a new house. Like most things Abyssinian, it was a curious mixture of civilisation and barbarism—collections of incongruous articles, some of them very beautiful, brought back by the Ras from his tour

in Europe being packed side by side with crude native productions of all kinds.

The most interesting part of the *gebbi*, however, was the series of store-houses in which the Ras stocks the enormous supplies of miscellaneous things which he buys, manufactures, trades in, or makes other use of ; these throw a most instructive light on his many-sided interests.

There were in some of them stacks of timber, from thick logs to slender canes, for building purposes ; piles of home-made roofing-tiles of the baked clay of which the water-pots are made ; and immense quantities of native forged iron heads for agricultural instruments.

Other houses were, I suppose, to be described as dairies ; in these there were scores of immense earthen vessels each containing many pounds of the most evil-smelling compound, which I gathered was butter ; it was described to me as being quite new—only two or three months old ; it was supposed to keep for a year or more at least, and there was a large trade in it. I suppose there is a market for everything in the world, and it is fairly obvious that the Ras would not have caused these hundredweights of stuff to be made unless he could sell them ; but I entertained feelings of respect, unmixed with envy, for the digestive organs of those who were to consume this dairy produce.

Other forms of native manufacture filled several houses ; earthenware *gombos* of every size and shape for holding *tej* and *talla* and carrying water ; baskets of plaited coloured straws ; mats of many varieties ; knives for the use of his guests at the great banquets ; lion, leopard, and goreza skins, and so on.

Yet other buildings were filled with goods imported from Europe—stacks of wallpaper, gallons of paint, thousands of the small glass decanters in which drinks of all kinds are distributed at the banquets, enamelled cups, plates, dishes, and utensils of all kinds.

The armoury was an extraordinarily fascinating place, containing, in addition to large quantities of modern rifles,

an immense assortment of Abyssinian-made weapons—swords, spears, and shields; uniforms of all kinds, from the gold-embroidered velvet capes and trousers of the great officers down to the humble cotton shirts of the rank and file.

There were cellars full of “old vintages” of the home-made beverages, and some modern imported wines as well, while discretion forbids me to do more than merely refer to the treasury and magazine.

All these things and very many more were in vast quantities, to the European eye in some confusion, but, in fact, classified and listed in their own method in the different houses under close control; I saw a number of articles being “returned to store” after the festivities, and the processes of checking and examining, though lengthy, seemed extremely thorough.

Ras Hailu is really a very remarkable character. In some ways he is just a child of Africa, but gifted with the instincts and feelings of a gentleman, displaying none of the mere veneer of the semi-civilised Oriental who, though polished on the surface, often has really the instincts of a beast. Ras Hailu was not only amazingly kind and generous to us, but full of thought and consideration for my wife's comfort. He would never want to let her dismount from her pony on ceremonial occasions when everyone else did; when she did he always had a seat put for her in the shade, and in a score of little ways showed that he studied her comfort. Yet he himself would squat *à la turque* instead of sitting whenever he could, eat raw meat and other weird dishes with his fingers out of more than questionable receptacles, and lived in surroundings which would probably be condemned by a County Council Inspector. And yet when he was in Europe with Ras Tafari he lunched and dined with Kings and Presidents, stayed at palaces and luxurious hotels, and behaved as if he had done that sort of thing all his life.

He is exceedingly shrewd, a first-class trader, and a keen

judge of men ; he has immensely increased the area and wealth of his country and his own wealth, and his very large province is one of the best governed in Abyssinia.

If one adds to these attributes the fact that he is a great sportsman, a good horseman, and an indefatigable worker, it is not difficult to understand his success and his popularity.

Of course everything is not always *couleur de rose* on these trips, even in Debra Markos, and, lest we should find life too easy, the even tenor of our way was occasionally ruffled by a series of disconcerting incidents of a minor character. In the first place we both fell victims to the assaults of fleas innumerable from the first moment of our arrival in camp—they must have been half starved before our advent, for the ravages they committed on our persons were unspeakable. We collected some fifty each from our sleeping-*raiment* before giving up the task in despair and resigning ourselves to play the star parts in a fleas' *broundou* banquet.

On another occasion we had just sat down to a meal in our very gorgeous Egyptian eating-tent when the boy who was waiting on us suddenly leaped into the air with a yell, dropped the dish he was carrying, and began rubbing his leg vigorously. Investigation revealed the fact that an enormous army of ants, the large, black, biting variety, had invaded the tent, doubtless attracted by the fact that our food-boxes were piled around it. Our wretched men, whose bare feet and legs afforded a pleasant target for the ants, strove vainly to rid the place of these pests. But it was quite useless, the swarming myriads covered everything, and we had to clear out of the tent, remove all our gear (a matter of no little difficulty in the circumstances), and by pulling up the sides of the tent let in the sunlight, and then apply fire to the ground. The combined effect of sun and fire ultimately cleared the place, and a bed of eucalyptus-branches under the rugs helped to keep them away from the fresh site we chose for the tent.

Later on in the day a sort of minor whirlwind passed through our *zareba*, and in a moment the big ceremonial

tent which had been erected for us by the Ras was flat on the ground amid breaking ropes and cracking poles. All hands were turned on to save the other tents, and we just managed to do so, though it was touch and go with some of them, and our food-boxes were scattered in various directions, fruit and jam strewn the beautiful rugs our host had provided us with.

And finally, on doing my usual evening "pony inspection," I found our best animal looking very sorry for himself and bleeding profusely at the mouth. After prolonged investigation one of our men, who was feeling around inside the back of the pony's mouth, pulled out a large, wriggling, black worm about three inches long and very fat, which was embedded between the mouth and nostril. Apparently horses and cattle pick up these pests in the water when drinking, and the worm burrows in, works its way under the skin through the mouth into the nostril, or, what is worse, down the throat. (Incidentally I may mention that the water we ourselves drank came from the same source—it made us rather thoughtful.)

But these and other similar little incidents merely served to enhance the many interesting features of our stay in Markos, of which the most striking was probably the great festival of Temkat, or Blessing of the Waters, and the really wonderful pageantry attendant on this celebration.

The point as to whether the ceremony of Temkat is intended to be merely in commemoration of and symbolical of the baptism of Christ, or whether it is, in addition, a form of rebaptism, has been hotly disputed by writers on the subject. Not only so, but travellers to the country have given quite contradictory accounts of the ceremony, and have ascribed the basest motives to those offering different relations.

For example, the priest Alvarez, writing in 1527, gives a long and detailed account of the ceremony, alleging that thousands of people, men and women, including the Abuna, aged 110, and the King and Queen, all entered a bath,

formed by a dammed-up river, stark naked, all "as their mothers bore them," except the Abuna, King, and Queen, who "wore cloths over their nakedness" and were plunged under the water three times, the officiating priest pronouncing the formal words of baptism. He adds that oil was thrown into the water before he came, no doubt to indicate that it was a real baptism, and he appears to have protested against the idea of being baptised more than once as being contrary to the teaching of the Church.

The missionary Krapf, who was in Abyssinia in 1839, also describes the ceremony as one of baptism, and states that "all the people, old and young, being quite naked, plunged themselves into the water." He refers to it as "an abominable ceremony," and, on arguing with the people about it, found some to agree with him.

Tellez says that "at other times and for slight causes both men and women cause themselves to be rebaptised, and that after a most indecent manner."

On the other hand, Ludolf, writing in 1679, expresses doubts as to the accuracy of the accounts given by Alvarez and Tellez; and Bruce, who was three years in Abyssinia, flatly denies the truth of their assertions. He says that he witnessed the ceremony on a number of occasions, that, with the exception of a few boys, he never saw people plunge into the stream, and that he never saw or heard of any of them taking off their clothes. He denies that "baptism or anything like baptism is meant by the ceremony," and points out that "a man is no more baptised by keeping the anniversary of our Saviour's baptism than he is crucified by keeping his crucifixion."

In the face of these and other conflicting accounts of eye-witnesses it is difficult to establish the facts with any certainty. My own view is that there is some element of truth in all these accounts; Bruce witnessed the ceremony in the north of Abyssinia only, Krapf and Alvarez in the south, and it is possible that the ceremony differed in the two districts. It is also possible that while, according to

the correct doctrine, no baptism is intended, yet the ignorance of the priesthood—and they are and always have been an appallingly ignorant body—may, in the past, have distorted the ceremony into this elaboration.

I have been present at Temkat on several occasions, both in the north and the south, and I have never seen people take off their clothes and plunge into water, nor have I seen oil poured into the water. On the other hand, I always read the accounts of the old Portuguese Jesuits with some scepticism, as they are extremely inaccurate and, like most religious fanatics, extremely biassed.

On the whole, therefore, although I have actually been given both versions by Abyssinians, I am inclined to regard the ceremony as a commemorative one rather than as an act of baptism.

Be that as it may, it is an intensely interesting festival, lasting three days, the 18th, 19th, and 20th January according to our calendar, each day being devoted to a separate and distinct ceremonial.

On the first of the three days the priests bring the *tabots* or Arks from the different churches in solemn procession to tents erected by a dammed-up river, where they are left all night in preparation for the next day's greater ceremony.

Great reverence is paid to these arks; the Abyssinians believe that Menelik, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, carried off the original ark of the covenant with him from the Temple of Jerusalem when he escaped back to Abyssinia secretly by the miraculous assistance of Providence.

A sanctuary was built for it at Axum, and one of the chief officers of the kingdom appointed as *nubarak* or Keeper of the Ark. The Ark is still supposed to be in the church at Axum, and in order to preserve this belief none but a bishop is allowed access to that particular sanctuary—any other individual who dared to look at it would be punished by Providence with death. An American expedition under the leadership of a well-known explorer was to proceed to



Abyssinia to search for the Ark in 1926, but it is unlikely that they would be allowed to find it!—even if any Abyssinian knew really where it was.

Each church has a representation of the Ark kept within the central part of the building, or Holy of Holies, and these emblems are regarded with great veneration by the people.

On the present occasion we rode off in the afternoon to meet the first of the processions, and, halting on a little rise, watched the approach of this very remarkable and gorgeous display. There were of course hundreds of soldiers and scores of priests, those immediately surrounding the Tabot resplendent in coloured robes and head-dresses, bright-coloured, gold-fringed parasols being held over them. The Tabot itself was covered with embroidered cloths, whilst hundreds of the population of Markos walked beside. At the end of the procession rode Ras Hailu, who invited us to join him, and together we rode on in the midst of the huge crowd to the tents where, amid much ceremony, the Tabots were duly deposited.

Then we rode across the hill to receive another Tabot coming from the Church of the Virgin. The chief priest from this church was a most startling figure; instead of being dressed in brilliant robes, he was arrayed in filthy and tattered brown rags, which the breeze blew about him in a very picturesque fashion. He was a huge, gaunt man with long, shaggy hair and beard and piercing, mad eyes. As he waved his praying-stick and marshalled his priests, he brought to one's mind vividly an image of what one imagines John the Baptist must have been after a prolonged course of living and fasting in the wilderness—a fanatic if ever there was one.

Other processions now streamed over the hills, but, in view of the strenuous day promised us for the to-morrow, we took the opportunity of slipping away to our camp for an early dinner. These functions are distinctly exhausting.

The next morning we were in position at the tents by the river, on the great plain at the foot of the hill where the

town stands, in time to see the Ras's great procession begin to wind down towards us. It was indeed a wonderful sight, quite dwarfing the *lever de rideau* we had witnessed the day before. Amid dense crowds, consisting of practically the entire population of the place, the head of the column appeared, masses of soldiery, several bands of musicians, a group of trumpeters in scarlet robes on wild little ponies, men on mules, men on horses, men in brilliant cloaks and long swords, mounted spear-men galloping wildly over the plain to show off their mounts and their horsemanship, then more soldiers in red-bordered, spotless white *shammas* carrying rifles—on and on in an endless column. There followed a party of the Ras's own guards, a couple of hundred riflemen in short yellow coats, and then at last the Tabots covered with brilliant cloths, and finally the Ras himself in a gold-embroidered, black silk cloak, riding a mule that was almost entirely hidden under gold-embroidered trappings.

Around him were the more important soldiers and chiefs, mounted and on foot, their clothes and trappings a riot of colour.

We rode on with the Ras to where the Tabot tents stood in the midst of a crowd of nearly 10,000 people, and we looked on the wonderful sight, sitting beside the ruler of this strange people under the war-tent used by his father in his expeditions against the dervishes, and watched the progress of the old ceremonial of the priests under the blazing sun and the still blue sky; it seemed utterly unreal and imaginary, so completely divorced was it all from the world in which one normally lives.

They sprinkled us all with the water that had been blessed, a short "service" was held before each of the Tabots, and then we remounted and rode slowly back in the midst of the crowds towards the *gebbi*.

There followed the old national sport of *guks*, a game many centuries old, reference to which is found in the very earliest books on Abyssinia. Armed with long, thin

"spears" of wood and shields, mounted men galloped their ponies at top speed round in a wide circle, throwing their spears at each other and catching them on their shields as they rode. The Ras himself took part and proved a great shot, his "spears" getting home every time—it was a remarkable exhibition of skill and horsemanship. Sometimes the men were formed into opposing groups, charging each other at full speed—and, dangerous though it seemed, there was never an accident.

The Tabots are taken back to the churches in solemn procession on the evening of the second day's ceremonial, except those coming from churches of Saint Mikael. These remain in the tents until the third day, when, amid scenes similar to those already described, Saint Mikael's Tabots return to their usual abodes.

It is difficult to convey anything like an accurate picture of a pageant such as this—the vastness of the whole thing, the natural setting of wonderful scenery, the wealth of colour, the amount of movement and detail, the historical association of pagan, Egyptian, Jewish, and Coptic rites—they all go to make up a feast for the eye and ear and mind which is impossible to bring out on paper.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### FROM DEBRA MARKOS TO THE NILE VALLEY

IN a manner characteristic of the country, we were able to acquire a delightful specimen of native ecclesiastical art whilst we were at Debra Markos. One night after dinner we were told that a man wanted to see us, but that he would not come into our tent. So I went out and found an elderly individual squatting in the semi-darkness outside the tent; he rose as I came out, and after the usual interchange of courtesies he looked round to see if we were alone, and then mysteriously extracted from the folds of his *shamma* a package wrapped in several layers of *abugedid*, which turned out to be a carved and painted wooden double triptych; it was obviously old and a very good example of native workmanship. The centre panel on one side contained a representation of the Archangel Mikael, whilst the two opening panels were decorated with paintings of the other six archangels, three on each panel, viz. Gabriel, Raguel, Uriel, Raphael, Fanoel, and Sakoel. On the centre panel on the other side was a carved and painted picture of the Virgin and Child, the latter holding a white ball representative of the world—"The world is in my hand"—with Mikael and Gabriel on either side; the side panels contained two smaller pictures each. One of these represented the crucifixion, with the Virgin and Saint John standing at the foot of the cross; another the resurrection; the third the head of Christ with Judas on either side—Judas portrayed side-face, as is the practice in the case of the wicked; while the fourth picture presented somewhat of a problem. A hand is appearing from some clouds pointing to a figure (obviously a good man, as he is full face) who

is standing among a number of profiles appearing from amid flames. One interpretation given me was that this represented God's hand telling Saint George to send the bad people round him into the flames of hell ; the other that it represented Christ giving His hand to Adam when he was in hell as a sign that He baptised him.

The old gentleman who brought this treasure was rather vague about it, and obviously rather nervous ; I asked him if he wanted to sell it, to which he replied that he wished to give it to me as a present. Knowing the meaning of this kind of " present," I also made him a " present " of some dollars, which seemed to please him mightily, and we parted the best of friends. My questions as to the age and origin of the work were, I regret to say, met with a certain amount of evasiveness, and, being of an optimistic temperament, I trust sincerely that it was acquired honestly. But I am bound to say that it looked remarkably like a piece of church furniture.

Pictures of this nature cover the walls of almost every church in Abyssinia, and they vary very much in merit ; art being more or less conventional and traditional, the modern painters reproduce the same subjects in the same colours as the old pictures of centuries ago. But it is rare to find an old wooden triptych of this kind—indeed I have not come across any others.

We found much of interest to explore in Debra Markos and its neighbourhood, but our time was running out, and all good things must come to an end some day. Moreover, our men were showing obvious signs of having had too little to do and too much to eat, and discipline is always more difficult to maintain in a stationary camp than when the incessant work involved by shifting one's abode daily keeps all hands busy and out of mischief.

But we found it quite difficult to get away, for our host insisted on finding one excuse after another to delay our departure ; *inter alia* he explained that he had not yet completed the " road-making " he was doing to smooth the way for us by the different route we intended to follow homewards.



An old carved and painted wooden triptych, representing St. Mikael and the six archangels, acquired by the author in Gojam.



In the old days, indeed some centuries ago, it was the over-hospitable practice of the monarchs of Abyssinia to keep with them for all time any white traveller that might have found his way to their court, and we almost began to fear lest the traditions of the past, so strongly embedded in our host, might be inclining him in that direction !

At last, however, the starting-day was fixed, and the Ras brought the Wayzaro Sabela Wangel to our camp for a farewell banquet, which, in spite of our best efforts, must have fallen woefully short of the entertainments which he had offered us.

The ex-Empress arrived with a large escort, riding a mule covered with scarlet and gold trappings that touched the ground, and attended by four "ladies in waiting," also riding mules and holding up parasols—all the ladies of the party being, of course, closely veiled.

Dismounting was an operation screened from the eye of the vulgar by a dozen men of the suite removing their *shammas* and holding them up all round the ladies in a sort of screen ; and then, after a further amount of disrobing within a tent, we set to work on the serious business of lunch.

Nothing would persuade our cook that a few good courses would meet the case ; in his view an occasion like this could not be dealt with under at least a dozen, and how he managed to do it with the extraordinarily slender resources at his disposal, both in the way of *batterie de cuisine* and table furniture, I cannot imagine.

But he did, and course followed course, until at the end there appeared a wonderful cake that he had constructed, interlaid with layers of jam, a remarkable production in the circumstances and one that caused universal satisfaction.

That night, just as we were putting the finishing touches to the dismantling of the camp, a messenger arrived from the Ras saying that he had sent us a few small farewell souvenirs. And by the light of the camp-fires and a few lanterns we received a string of officers and servants who, with much ceremony, handed over to us these "small



souvenirs." An admirable pony and a couple of fine riding-mules with silver-mounted harness headed the procession, and then lion skins, fur rugs, and elephant-tusks were piled in front of us, so that we were literally dumbfounded at this truly princely manner of speeding the parting guests—it was certainly a very delightful termination to a very delightful visit.

The next morning at 7 a.m. the Ras breakfasted with us and bade us his final farewells, and, with feelings of very real regret, we turned our backs on this curious little African town and its great-hearted ruler and started on our homeward trek.

Our men obviously felt that they must make as brave a show as possible, so they insisted on staging a little procession instead of straggling off as is our usual method on trek. Headed by our guide, armed of course with the inevitable rifle, the caravan got into line, and two of our men insisted on leading before us the gaily-caparisoned mules covered with scarlet saddle-cloths and silver-mounted bridles which the Ras had given us. With these and the new pony our train of riding and pack animals had become quite a large one, and to this was added the unwilling companionship of an ox and two sheep not yet eaten. Our twenty men had done their best—they had eaten seven oxen and nearly a dozen sheep in seven weeks—but there were limits even to their powers of absorption.

Pride comes before a fall, however, and our triumphal progress did not last long. Our guide, who was obviously the worse—or the better—for a number of farewell libations, led us to the wrong crossing of a tributary of the Chomoga River, a very poor ford between high, steep banks, the bed of the river being a mass of muddy bog concealed under thick water.

In a few minutes the scene became very animated, the curses of the men and the kicks of the recalcitrant mules testifying to the universal unpopularity acquired by the guide in his choice of direction. This worthy, fired by the abuse descending on his head, made a desperate effort to

show how easy the crossing really was ; his mule got hopelessly stuck in the bog, and our friend rolled off him into the sticky mass. Man and beast were hauled out with some difficulty amid the delighted jeers of our people, whilst we ourselves had to crawl ignominiously one by one across a wet and slippery tree-trunk precariously poised on high between bank and bank, and then wait while our ponies were brought across the river by a circuitous path higher upstream.

It was good to be on the move again, away into the bush alone, away from houses and from men, amid all the freshness and the solitude and vegetation. For, although Ras Hailu had been amazingly kind to us and had overwhelmed us with the most generous hospitality, and although we had seen some remarkable ancient ceremonies and many other interesting things and learned a good deal, yet life in an African village has its drawbacks. The atmosphere of our *zareba*, full of men and animals, had become somewhat pronounced, and living in huts lacking ventilation and populated by livestock small in size but vast in quantity is a pleasure apt to pall after a time, even though the said huts are carpeted with priceless Persian rugs.

The scenery on our new route was most attractive, flowers and flowering trees being plentiful ; we found many white mimosa and one very striking wood of tall trees forty to fifty feet high, thickly covered with large orange-coloured, savage-looking flowers. In some other woods we found the *araga* creeper, hanging down in coils many yards in length, pliable and thick as a stout rope, which purpose indeed it serves, for the natives use it to tie up the wooden posts and the roofing of their homes ; when cut it emits a liquid similar to milk in colour and consistency.

Birds and animals were extraordinarily tame ; in a clearing in some woods I walked into a pair of gazelles, and, having only a shot-gun with me, stared blankly at them ; they returned the stare with interest for a moment before disappearing with long, easy leaps into the brushwood. Some guinea-fowl obligingly descended into some open ground

across the river where we camped and provided us with a welcome addition to the larder, whilst duck could almost have been brought down with a catapult.

The country became less pleasant as we approached the Abbai again, this time about one hundred miles farther up than where we had crossed it on our outward journey; we struck the Baichait River high up on its course, afterwards following its eastern bank along the edge of an ever-deepening ravine, at the bottom of which, many hundreds of feet below, the river rolled on its way to join the Nile—it was a fine bit of rugged scenery, though the vegetation was poor.

After a few days we reached the village at the top of the encampment where we were to begin the climb down. Here the local *shum* appeared most unwilling to provide us with facilities to continue—he invented every excuse to prevent our departure, finally pointing out that we could not cross until an escort of soldiers should arrive from Ras Kassa's country south of the Abbai, as the valley was infested by *shiftas* (brigands) just here, and if anything happened to us he would get into sore trouble.

I am afraid we treated his protests with scant consideration, for, as I have already said, I was and am extremely sceptical as to the existence of these folk, or, at all events, as to any danger from them, and we were fully able to look after ourselves if they had come. It is quite true that attacks by *shiftas* are occasionally reported, but I am inclined to think that they are more often merely quarrels between villagers and the men of the caravan, due perhaps to the leader's ignorance of language and customs, or to unreasonable demands made on the villagers by the men in their leader's name, and of course unknown to him.

Nevertheless, the *shum's* fears had communicated themselves to the men, and it was rather a jumpy crowd that followed us down the steep and winding track that led down into the valley. It was pleasant to see once again the great Abbai chasm from another point of view, but less so to clamber down its cliffs, though the descent here was not

to be compared in difficulty with that which we had made previously. It was, however, more picturesque, the valley dropping to the river in a series of great terraces, of which the higher ones were well and fully cultivated, many villages being scattered on the way, at the last of which we camped, rather more than half way down.

Before daybreak the next morning we started off to make the crossing, dropping between sheer walls of perpendicular cliff by a winding path that might have suited an Alpine goat, and which twisted and curled through a maze of cliffs and dense vegetation down to the river, the latter part of the drop being really hard going. It was a wonderfully peaceful scene, and a very grand one, as we waited at the ford for our caravan to pick us up. The sun had not yet been able to throw its rays down on to the water over the tops of cliffs that closely walled the river, and the air was cool, the gorge being filled with the remnants of a faint, thin mist that gave it an almost eerie appearance. Between the grey-black rocks the river could be seen for quite a distance above and below, now foaming over falls, now running dark and silent through deep pools; a few monkeys chattered to us from the trees, whilst here and there a swirl in the water or what might have been a floating log indicated that bathing was probably not without its drawbacks.

And while we waited, the sun climbed over the edge of the cliff and the temperature rose rapidly in the narrow space wherein we rested, so that it was a welcome moment when the caravan mules scrambled down to us and we were able to marshal them for the crossing.

Being so much higher up the river, above the places where several large tributaries add their waters to that of the Nile, we were able to dispense with the paraphernalia of *jandis* and to cross by fording. The ford here ran obliquely across the stream, and so it was rather a long business to negotiate it, especially as the current was very rapid and the bottom consisted of large, loose stones and was full of holes. These, and the banging of rifles to scare away crocodiles,

which are supposed to be particularly dense just here, frightened the ponies rather badly, and we had much difficulty in getting them over, the water coming up over their saddle-flaps. But all was accomplished without accident, and even without serious damage to the mule-loads, which had been lashed specially high up on the animals backs to escape wetting.

After "drinking of the waters of the Nile" to ensure that we should return one day to this most fascinating spot, we started on a stiffish climb up the southern bank, and nearly half-way up camped at a most disgusting place, where stones seemed to be the only thing that grew, supplies were unobtainable, and where, by way of drinking, we had to share the water of a muddy half-dry stream with the cattle and dogs of the village, an unattractive collection of tumble-down dirty huts. Our share was mostly mud.

Our caravan was here embellished by the addition of a crocodile, not, I regret to say, alive, although it looked remarkably life-like. It was a huge creature measuring almost ten feet from snout to tail, and it had been most realistically "set up" by the natives who had killed it a few days previously in the Abbai. They had stuffed it with dried grass; the tail turned slightly upwards in an indignant curve, and the partly open jaws showed its sixty-six gruesome-looking teeth in perfect condition and seemingly ready for a meal. The track was too narrow and steep the next day for us to be able to load it safely on a mule, so we bargained with some of the villagers to carry it to the top of the escarpment. There it was lashed firmly on the back of one of our pack-animals, and presented a truly terrifying appearance as it moved through the long grass, the gaping jaws extending over the top of the mule's head and the tail appearing to wave in the air as it swayed to the mule's movements.

The villagers more remote from the Abbai whom we met later on were immensely impressed with the, to them, unknown monstrosity, and some of the children fled screaming into their huts when the "dragon" appeared.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE NILE VALLEY TO ADDIS ABABA

A FURTHER day's climb brought us over the edge of the escarpment into the country of Salale, a comparatively uninteresting plain where we were baked by day and frozen at night, and where long marches were necessary in order to secure anything like good camping-grounds. At one of these we saw rather an unusual phenomenon; the full moon had just appeared in its entirety over the eastern edge of the plain, while at the same moment the great red ball of the sun was hanging over the western edge; for a few seconds we could see them both at the two extreme points of the horizon—a weird effect—and then the sun dropped out of sight and the moon turned everything bright silver, and converted our somewhat repulsive camping-ground into a thing of beauty. Camp always seems to look picturesque by moonlight, however unattractive it may be in the glare of day.

On the way up we had come across a number of little platforms built in the trees, and these we discovered were the "observation posts" for the soldiers of Ras Kassa, in whose territory we now were, which they occupied when guarding the crossing against *shiftas*. Apparently, when a *nagadi* caravan crossed, soldiers would descend to the river, fifty on either side, and squat in these little nests to ensure the safety of the merchants—it was the absence of such a guard that had so alarmed our friend the *shum* on the opposite bank.

In Salale, about five hours' trek from the celebrated monastery of Debra Libanos, some ruins of remarkable interest were unearthed by the efforts of Ras Kassa.

According to the late Mr. Wilfred Thessiger, formerly British Minister in Abyssinia, it had for many years been known to the local inhabitants that the present little round church of Echege, built in the usual Abyssinian style with thatched roof and round walls, stood on the ruins of an older church destroyed during or before the Muslim invasion in about 1530.

Ras Kassa caused trenches to be dug which revealed some really excellent carved stonework, including a pattern of interlaced arches carved in low relief on slabs of stone about four inches thick, such as probably exists nowhere else in Abyssinia, though found in early European buildings. Now it is obvious that, given the date of the destruction of the old church, it must have been built *before* the arrival of the Portuguese in Abyssinia; it was probably destroyed long before the Muslim invasion, and Mr. Thessiger seemed to think that it dated possibly from the eleventh or twelfth century.

If this is so, it points to the existence of an earlier civilisation in Abyssinia, farther south than has been generally supposed, and may not be unconnected with the archaeological discoveries of Father Azais, which have been described in an earlier chapter.

But in actual interest this little church is entirely eclipsed by the neighbouring monastery of Debra Libanos, the most famous and venerable of all the monasteries of Abyssinia, indissolubly associated with the memory of the great national saint, Takla Haymanot.

The monastery was originally named Debra Asbo, and received its present name in 1445 from King Zara Jacob. The date of its foundation is uncertain, various legends alleging that it was built in the twelfth century, or by Takla Haymanot himself in the thirteenth century, or by King Saifa Arad in 1366, fifty-two years after the saint's death on the spot where he died. Probably the last-named hypothesis is the more correct, as another legend says that the saint's bones were translated to the present monastery

in 1366, and it is universally believed that his bones rest there now.

The monastery was, like most of the other Abyssinian churches, burned by the Muslims in 1530, and the Arab chronicler of the time relates that, so terrible was the grief of the monks at the sight of the destruction of their beloved home, "they threw themselves into the flames like butterflies into a lamp."

It was soon rebuilt, and has enjoyed from then until now great wealth and influence, successive kings having endowed it with grants of land, gold, silver, and cattle.

The head of the monks of Debra Libanos has always been known as the Echege; he is the chief of all the monks and monastic establishments of Abyssinia, and ranks second in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, being inferior only to the Abuna.

The monastery stands in an imposing position on a steep mountain-side, and is exceedingly difficult of access; near it is a round church, of the type used in Abyssinia, which was founded by King Yeshak in the beginning of the fifteenth century.

In a wood to the south is a sacred spring of water supposed to have been brought underground from the River Jordan by Saint Michael; the water is alleged to heal diseases and wash away sin, and when visited by the missionary Krapf in 1840, he said that it "disagreed with him," which must have confirmed the local inhabitants in their belief in its potency! Many Abyssinians make an annual pilgrimage there in the month of May, the anniversary of Takla Haymanot's death, many of them with the object of bathing in or drinking these waters, a practice which extends to other sacred or medicinal springs elsewhere in Abyssinia, such as the one at Ambo, described in the earlier part of the narrative.

We were glad to get clear of the Salale plain, and, keeping eastward of the ordinary route back to Addis Ababa in order to avoid the difficult crossing of the Muger River, we



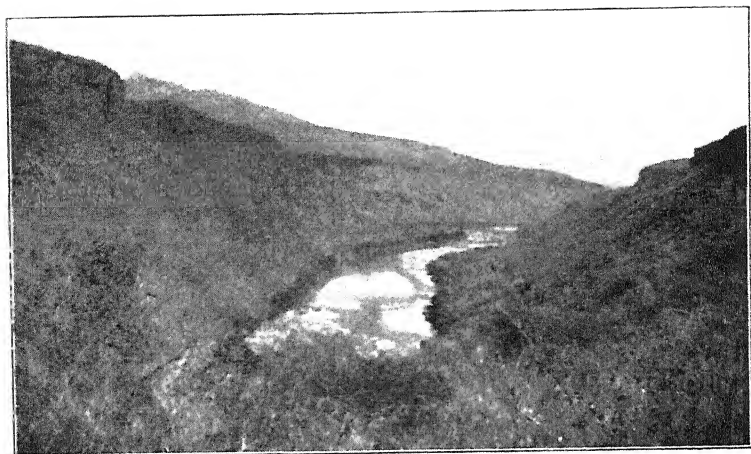
skirted the big range of Gara Gofu, crossed some broken country, and reached the Duber, a largish tributary of the Muger.

The climb down into the valley of this river was very beautiful ; the slopes were a mass of scarlet aloes and large bushes of a species of white flower unknown to us, interspersed with quantities of sweet-scented jasmine. The picturesqueness of the valley was, however, somewhat marred by the dead body of a mule half-eaten by jackals, lying right across the narrow path leading down to the river ; and this unfragrant remnant severely upset the nerves of our own animals, with the disastrous results we experienced soon afterwards.

We had crossed the river itself and, after watching the passage of our caravan, were preparing to mount to start the climb up the opposite bank, when something frightened the already jumpy mules and one of them knocked my wife down, and, falling sideways, she came down on her wrist and broke her arm just above it. At the time we could not tell whether the damage was a fracture, a dislocation, or a bad sprain, and we consequently had to apply such remedies as we could to alleviate the intense pain, and concentrate our energies on getting back into Addis Ababa with the utmost possible speed.

The first problem was how to get up the exceedingly stiff cliff that faced us ; we had a carrying-hammock with us, but it was constructed to be carried by two pairs of two men abreast, and the narrow track up the cliff was by no means wide enough to allow of this.

Our men were, however, equal to the occasion, and somehow or other two of the strongest managed to get the hammock up to the top. Then, after a short rest, we despatched a messenger on our best pony to bring out medical assistance and a vehicle of sorts from Addis, if it could be got out, and started off at a good, swinging pace to complete this last and most disastrous lap of our trek. All that day the men carried splendidly, though they were utterly unused to the



The valley of the Blue Nile at Shifartak, taken from about 1,500 feet up the cliff. The size of the valley may be gauged from the fact that the narrow dark line of bank at the bottom is a cliff over 100 feet high, and the river is the narrow streak in the centre of the river bed.



Our caravan crossing the Blue Nile at Shifartak on our way home.



work, and by nightfall we had covered a lot of ground, though the party was a weary one.

We stopped for a bit at dark, in the hope of seeing relief arrive, and also to feed and rest the men, and then, leaving the camp and all our outfit behind in the charge of half a dozen men, and taking the sixteen strongest to carry in relays of four, we started off again by moonlight.

It was a weird and ghost-like procession, the loose white *shammas* of the men fluttering around them, their bare feet making little noise on the hard ground, the stillness only broken by their hard breathing, for it was too bitterly cold at that hour to induce them to sing and chatter as usual, and they were genuinely distressed at my wife's misfortune.

On through the night we went, until at last a faint light appeared over the eastern hills to our left, the stars began to pale, and then the light increased, the sun climbed over the hills, and we began to thaw.

The men now began to chatter again, but they never stopped carrying or even to change carriers, one man taking another's place without a break as they jogged on their way. I must say that they had been simply splendid from the very start, every man insisting on taking his turn, even the headman, the cook, and our personal boys; they never waited to be told to relieve, but always wanted to take their turn before the other man was ready—that is to say, before he was really "done."

There were no signs as yet of doctor or vehicle, and we had to stop for a breather and some food as the day wore on, then started on the last stage of the climb up the 11,000 feet Entoto Mountains that ring Addis Ababa around on the north. It was a stiff pull-up, but I knew that when the top was reached the worst was over and we were nearly "home." And so indeed we were, for at that point we found a car piloted by a very sporting Frenchman who had got up there to help to bring us in.

We bade a temporary farewell to our good fellows who had brought us along so splendidly, and started off at a

great pace down the hillside into Addis round hair-raising bends. My feeling of confidence would have been greater had not our driver remarked pleasantly that his brake (in the singular) was a little weak, but that he expected it would hold out until we got to the bottom.

It did, and it was indeed a relief to find our good friend Dr. Bevilacqua waiting to deal with the extremely painful fracture from which (as we discovered later) my wife was suffering, but which she had borne without a word during the long period of carrying over frightfully rough ground by men who, though willing enough, had never carried a hammock before.

During these last two days we met with the most remarkable examples of courtesy from the Abyssinians whom we passed en route. Repeatedly people travelling along, casual passers-by, would stop and enquire what had happened, and, on learning that a "foreign lady" had met with an accident, would get down from their mules, take the place of one of our men at the hammock poles, and carry for three or four hundred yards, sometimes farther, as a mark of sympathy. One man indeed not only did this, but insisted on one of our men riding his mule while he himself carried; on another occasion the wife of an Abyssinian "notable" who was passing sent two of her suite to carry for a bit, after expressing her sympathy at the accident.

There were repeated examples of this along the way, and I am bound to say I was much impressed—these people were complete strangers, they wanted nothing from us, and we were "foreigners," people who are not generally popular in Abyssinia. I think that as an example of courtesy and practical sympathy from complete strangers and men of another race it is hard to beat.

But I am glad to say that my experience of Abyssinians while on trek in that country has always been of the happiest and, so far from getting into trouble with them, I have never even had a rude word spoken to me, which is more than can be said of travelling about in post-war Europe.

Once back in Addis Ababa, we were in the midst of comparative luxury, but life there falls vastly short of the joys of existence on trek, though the loss of these was mitigated by the kindness of our friends, for whose thoughtfulness for an invalid we shall always be most grateful.

The business of paying off the men of one's caravan, disposing of one's animals, and packing up one's camp gear, is always a sad affair, tempered only by the thought of the pleasure of getting them all together again for the next trek. For when once one has tasted of the pleasures of the open road, the avocations of ordinary, every-day life and the comforts of civilisation lose much of their attractiveness, and in my humble opinion there is no Ritz-Carlton-Savoy in the world that can compare with a camp in the bush under the open sky of Africa.

Our men seemed to share these views, for long after they had been paid off and were free to go where they pleased, they would come round every morning to enquire after the invalid and to recall incidents of the trek.

Our return to Addis synchronised with the arrival of several other scientific expeditions which had been out in different parts of the country. Dr. Scott, on behalf of Cambridge University and the British Museum, had secured a large and valuable entomological collection in the neighbourhood of Mount Zuquala, the Arussi country, and the Muger Valley. Dr. Osgood, with a party of four other Americans, had penetrated to the south-east as far as Boran, and had returned laden with a miscellaneous assortment of birds and mammals for the Field Museum of Chicago; whilst two other Americans, Messrs. White and Carey, were about to leave for the Ogaden country to collect for the same institution. A party of Germans had just returned from a most interesting expedition to Lake Rudolf, whither they had journeyed for the purpose of securing live specimens of giraffes. They had had extraordinarily bad luck in the way of weather, and had been marooned away down in the south for nearly nine months; most of their giraffes, as well as

their transport animals, had died, but they had managed to get back to Addis, having had to tramp back on foot all the way, suffering from fever and privation, with two young animals which seemed in the best of condition.

Since then I have learned of two more expeditions ; one, to which reference has been made elsewhere, under the leadership of the American explorer Mr. Gordon MacCreagh, is to engage in the somewhat fantastic search for the lost Ark of the Covenant, presumably in north-east Abyssinia ; while the other, under Mr. Driberg, proposes to investigate the physical anthropology and social organisation of the Galla tribes on the southern frontiers of Abyssinia.

Very little is really known scientifically about Abyssinia, although there is a valuable collection of birds in the British Museum sent home some years ago by Mr. Zaphiro which has not received the public attention it deserves, and another collection has more recently been received there from Major Cheesman, H.M. Consul for north-west Abyssinia. It is to be hoped therefore that the information collected by these various expeditions will add appreciably to the small store of knowledge possessed regarding these very interesting aspects of the country, and that further research will be undertaken before the development of the country and the extension of communications and trade destroy or diminish the wealth of animal life that is to be found in most parts of Abyssinia to-day.

## CHAPTER XX

### DEVELOPMENT AND POSSIBILITIES

THE trade of Abyssinia is, like the rest of the development of the country, in an embryonic condition, amounting in value to an absurdly small figure for a land of such size and potential wealth ; last year the total figures of imports into and exports from Addis Ababa amounted only to \$14,810,000, or about £1,763,000, at the then rate of the dollar, and even if to this be added the figures of trade with the Sudan via the west (£370,000) and a certain amount by the other caravan routes and from Dire Dawa, the result is exceedingly small.

This is the more surprising when it is realised that Abyssinia has been a trading country for several thousands of years both by land and sea. One of the great trade routes of olden times led through the port of Adulis, the modern Zula, about twenty miles south of Massawa, now two miles from the sea on a river which has been completely silted up. Over this route, which led to the interior and to the Nile Valley at Meroe, travelled the exports of myrrh, gold dust, ivory, leather, and hides into Sabæa, whence they were passed on to the European markets.

The principal town on this route was then Ava, the modern Yeha, the inhabitants of which, the Avalites, were great traders, originating in Southern Arabia, whence some seven or eight centuries at least before Christ they had crossed the Red Sea and settled in Africa.

They must have reached a high stage of civilisation, for modern travellers describe the ruins of some magnificent pieces of ancient architecture at Ava, one of which has been more or less preserved to us from the fact that it has remained



a church and monastic establishment down to the present day. Near the church is a building which Alvarez described as a "very grand and beautiful tower . . . covered and inscribed with such excellent work that it looks as if it were nothing less than a royal palace such as I have never seen another like."

Between this town and Adulis are the ruins of another Sabæan town, in the centre of which is a large reservoir enclosed by a fine dyke or wall some two hundred and twenty feet long, which is still in an excellent state of preservation—a most interesting remnant of ancient engineering skill.

Ancient Himyaritic inscriptions discovered there by Bent and deciphered by Professor Müller establish the antiquity and the origin of the place, a settlement much older than Axum, which took its place, probably about 100 B.C., after Yeha had been destroyed.

Incidentally Ava (or Yeha) shares with Axum the honour of being alleged to be the place where Menelik, the son of Solomon, brought the Ark from Jerusalem; assuming the truth of the legend, it must obviously have been Ava rather than Axum, which town did not exist at that time.

But now these places have lost all commercial importance; some of them have disappeared, others have become part of the territory of encroaching European nations, and Abyssinia, bereft of all its coast-line and almost entirely lacking in modern communications, has lost what must have been a large and profitable volume of foreign trade.

Its only form of communications indeed, other than the old caravan tracks, is the Franco-Ethiopian Railway from the port of Jibuti to Addis Ababa, the vagaries of which I have already described. This railway, such as it is, has entirely ruined the trade into south-east Abyssinia from the port of Zeila in British Somaliland, which in 1900 practically monopolised the confidence of traders and assured the safety of the caravans from the coast into Abyssinia; with one-twentieth of the number of officials

employed at Jibuti, Zeila did in those days ten times the amount of the trade of the former town !

The advent of motor-cars at Addis Ababa, however, to which reference has already been made, and which has given such an impetus to road construction in that town, must inevitably have the effect of causing roadways to be extended towards other centres from the capital, and consequently it is probable that developments of this kind may be looked for before very long. Indeed, an effort is to be made during the present year to drive a six-wheeled Morris car from Berbera in British Somaliland to Addis Abada under its own power ; and if this succeeds it may open the door to all kinds of possibilities. It will not, however, be the first time that this has been done, for in 1907 Captain Bentley drove a Wolseley car from the coast to the capital ; this most remarkable feat took ten months to carry out, and provided the adventurous driver with all manners of thrilling experiences.

It is in part due to this absence of communications that trade development is so slow : such commercial institutions as exist are not conspicuously successful, and development seems to be proceeding by means of the grant of monopolies, an unfortunate *modus operandi*.

The oldest undertaking is the Bank of Abyssinia, which, established by charter from Menelik in the latter years of his reign, started its career by making no profits for twelve years, and then, since 1918, has paid dividends varying from 3 to 5 per cent., with a non-dividend-paying interval of three years, 1921 to 1923.

It is indicative of the backward state of the country that the bank has achieved so little success, for it has a banking monopoly for fifty years, and many other favourable and exclusive privileges, such as *inter alia* the right to issue banknotes, to mint coinage, and to take charge of Government deposits. It is only fair to say, however, that all these obligations have not always been observed by the Government, and that for many years the Abyssinians

suffered under the curious delusion that the bank had been established solely for the purpose of lending them money on comfortable terms whenever they needed it and for as long as they liked ; the shattering of this dream led to a certain amount of peevishness.

In spite of the monopoly enjoyed by the Bank of Abyssinia, the Abyssinians tried to establish a bank of their own ; after a year's working they announced a dividend of nearly 100 per cent., an event which caused some excitement and a distribution of largesse among the staff. How this somewhat dramatic success was arrived at, and whether a certain amount of confusion between depositors' accounts and profits may not have contributed to the results, has not transpired ; but there has been no news of any further dividends !

Another recent monopoly which has had a somewhat chequered experience during its brief career is that of the Alcohol Regie granted to a Belgian group of financiers. The object was to suppress the widespread distillation by numbers of Greeks of what was alleged to be a filthy and harmful spirit much appreciated by the Abyssinians, and to substitute a centralised and wholesome form of manufacture by a single company under Government control.

Large buildings and a distillery have been erected, but the Abyssinians resented the institution, and many of them started a sort of boycott. The Greek distillers too had to be compensated, and were awarded by arbitration the sum of \$300,000, which the Belgian company had to borrow from the Abyssinians. They are now said to have repaid this, but such a large sum, added to the immense preliminary expenditure incurred, must have crippled them somewhat, and it is doubtful whether they will recover very quickly ; they will have to distil a good deal of spirit to do so, especially as their monopoly does not cover the national beverages of *tej* and *talla*, which form the staple drink of the population and are prepared in every village and large household.

The increase in the excise duty which has been imposed

(from a quarter to half a dollar per litre) is not calculated to lead to an immediate increase of consumption, and the wine and spirit dealers of Addis Ababa have formed themselves into an association to safeguard their interests, a strangely modern development which may or may not help matters.

There is also a tobacco monopoly, run by some Armenians with a measure of success for some years; and a match monopoly worked by a quasi-Government Abyssinian company has recently been started.

Other enterprises include a Franco-Belgian cotton concession in Harar province, the terms of which savour suspiciously of monopolistic tendencies in fact, even though in theory it may not be so.

This enterprise appears to be run on business-like lines by people who really understand their job; they are using American plants previously acclimatised for some time in the Congo, and last year were anticipating a very fine crop. Unfortunately the unseasonable and abnormal rain destroyed every atom of it and fifty tons of first-class cotton were lost in fourteen days.

Two Belgian coffee plantations have been started in the Arussi province, one of 250,000, the other with 600,000 trees; and one at least of them must be developing satisfactorily, in as much as the capital of the enterprise has during the present year been increased from 3,000,000 to 12,000,000 francs. There is of course no reason why coffee should not do extremely well in Abyssinia, for the plant is indigenous to the country and was originally brought from there to Arabia in 1430 by Sheik Esh-Chadzeli; it has been exported for many years, and the quality is good in spite of the absence until recently of proper methods of cultivation.

Two Swiss pioneers have for some years been exploiting a forest concession some miles out of Addis Ababa, which town they supply very largely with timber for building and other purposes; and there is another timber concession away to the west which is worked in conjunction with the very

able and energetic Bishop Palacina's Italian mission, a curious combination of church and trade which is possibly not altogether without political importance as well.

At this station a large wooden house was recently made in a number of very small sections, and the thousands of pieces were carried by Gallas to Addis Ababa, where the house which had been presented to Ras Tafari was erected in his grounds, and is used by him as an adjunct to his palace—it is a really wonderful piece of workmanship. An enterprising Greek has also just erected a modern oil press in Addis, for which the machinery has been supplied by Krupp; the building was opened with much ceremony by the Regent.

But perhaps the most interesting development, as being the only one of its kind, is that a go-ahead Abyssinian, Fitawrari Daessa by name, has launched out in the soap industry at Addis, and the enterprise (originally founded by a Frenchman) is supposed to be competing strongly with the cheaper kind of imported soap.

There are of course a number of foreign trading companies and individuals engaged in the export of hides and coffee (of which an average quantity of about 9,000 tons and 11,000 tons respectively has been exported in each of the last three years), and in the import of cotton and other European goods; the principal of these is the Indian firm of Mohamedally, a branch of the large Bombay house of that name. And a few people are also engaged in agricultural development, among whom may be mentioned Colonel and Mrs. Sandford, who, with admirable and indefatigable zeal and energy, are running an experimental mixed farm and cattle-breeding establishment about thirty miles out of Addis.

Colonel Sandford's long and intimate acquaintance with Abyssinia and the Sudan, and his friendly relations with the people of the country, combined with his other qualifications, should undoubtedly result in making a success of this courageous pioneering effort.

All these, however, if hopeful indications, are but small

beginnings, and the country as a whole is practically undeveloped, whether from the commercial or agricultural point of view. There is hardly any mineral work going on as yet, with the exception of the exploitation by the Italians of some valuable deposits of potash salts in the north-east; one French company is exploiting the concession granted to an Italian in the Wallega district, and, as already mentioned, claims to have found platinum; there are, however, other claimants to the same districts, so that it would not be surprising if the usual difficulties attendant on concession-working in Abyssinia materialised.

The volume of trade last season certainly exceeded that of the previous year, but from all reports it does not seem to have been very profitable, having been carried on on a very small margin. Traders were, further, very much hit by the fact that in the trading season the dollar fell instead of rising. It had been low, and as a rise was generally anticipated large quantities of dollars had been bought in Austria. But the Chinese revolution caused a fall in the price of silver and the dollar fell in sympathy, thus leaving at a serious disadvantage the merchants who had bought their dollars ahead.

No European may now buy land in Abyssinia; he may rent it up to thirty years, but may not own it unless acquired from some of the very few foreigners who obtained title-deeds for their land during Lej Yasu's minority, i.e. in 1908-13.

The origin of this is curious. Before Menelik's attack of paralysis in 1908, no one, not even an Abyssinian, could own land in Addis Ababa; it was regarded as the King's camp, belonging entirely to the King, and always and completely at his disposal. He allowed a number of Abyssinians to occupy land in the town, but always at his pleasure and without title-deeds.

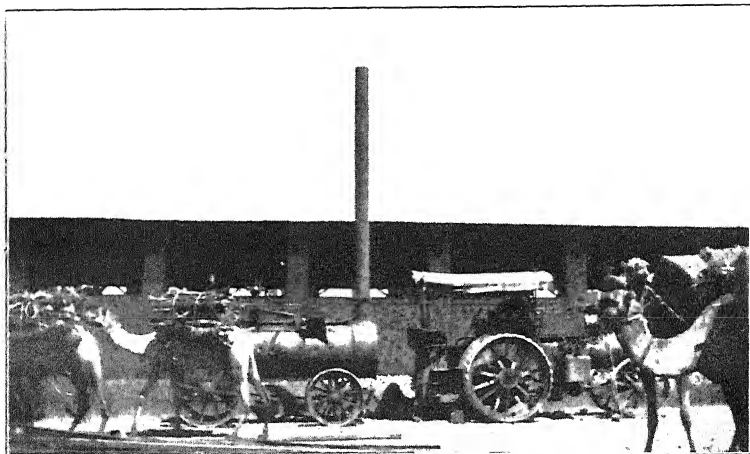
When the Emperor fell ill, a number of the big chiefs became nervous as to the tenure of their holdings, and persuaded the then Regent, Ras Tasama, to agree that they should be given title-deeds lest a future Emperor

should dispossess them. The Abuna was also persuaded to declare the pains and penalties of the Church against anyone who should endeavour to turn them out in the future, and, thus fortified, they were able to obtain from the Betwadet (or Prime Minister) under Lej Yasu title-deeds sealed in due form for their temporary possessions; a few foreigners managed to squeeze themselves in under this temporary lapse from orthodoxy. But all that is now a thing of the past, and, so far as land tenure is concerned, it is now a case of "Abyssinia for the Abyssinians."

The centre of all the trade of the country, and indeed practically the only place other than Dire Dawa where trade can be said to exist in any volume, is of course Addis Ababa, and the great market-place in the middle of the town is always a scene of wonderful activity, especially on Saturday mornings, when the entire space is practically packed with dense throngs of at least a dozen different races, exhibiting for sale every variety of the agricultural produce of the country, as well as earthenware pots, dung-cakes, bars of salt, baskets of every size and colour and shape, mules and donkeys, huge bundles of firewood and of hay, concealing from view the small animals that carry them, hides and skins, dyed leather, native jewellery, and all the imported European odds and ends to be found in every African township.

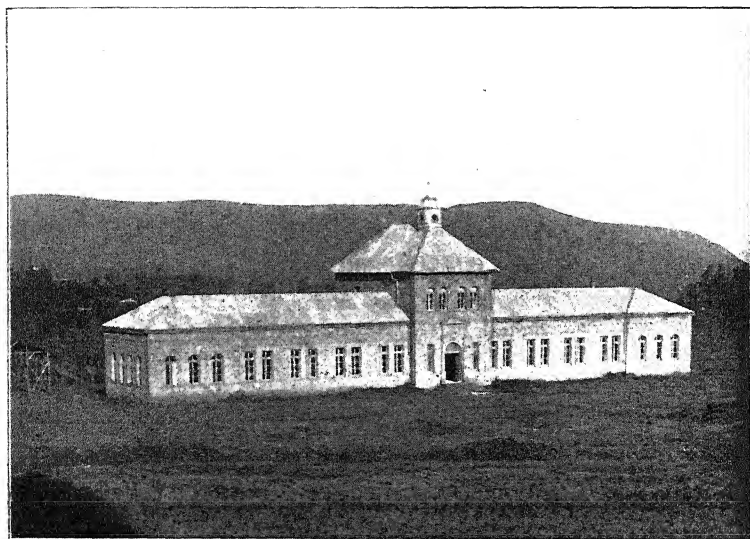
Up to now a piece of cloth spread on the ground or a pile of stones has served as a booth; but quite an imposing array of small erections to be used as shops or stalls was going up when we were there this year, and several quite large buildings were already nearly finished; when these are completed the market-place may gain in efficiency, but it will certainly lose in picturesqueness.

Between Addis and the rest of the country produce can only be carried on pack-animals, generally on mules and donkeys, sometimes on ponies, in the lowlands on camels. And even this intercourse is cut off in the rainy season, for then the tracks become impassable, the rivers unfordable,



# THE OLD AND THE NEW IN ADDIS ABABA

Camels carrying firewood from the station past a steam engine at rest. Camels are holding their own against motor transport in Addis owing to price.



THE OLD AND THE NEW IN ADDIS ABABA  
Schools recently erected by H.I.H. Ras Tafari.





and large tracks of country turn into spongy mud, through which it is difficult, if not impossible, for laden pack-animals to plough their way. One caravan which had gone down to Lake Rudolph with the intention of being away for five months was held up for fourteen, owing to the unexpected advent of the rain out of season.

When it is realised that the average load of a mule in this country is 150 to 200 lb., and its average speed two and a half miles per hour for a comparatively short number of hours per day, it will be realised what a handicap to trade development this form of transport is. On one trade route out to the west only donkeys are used, because it is known that nearly all the pack-animals die on that bit of track, so bad is the going, and donkeys are cheaper than mules. A recent traveller over that route told me that the sights and the smell along the track were too horrible to describe, the dead bodies of the unfortunate animals lying in every direction in all stages of decomposition, over quite an extensive area.

Even the currency—the Maria Theresa dollar, each coin weighing an ounce—has to be carried all over the country on mule-back hidden away in other goods, in order to pay for purchases, whether such purchases consist of food for the party or a whole district's coffee crop; and the only advantage which can be claimed for them is that they are better than rifle-cartridges or bars of salt, which are the means of exchange in some districts.

The value of the Maria Theresa dollar fluctuated during the war in a very violent manner, ranging from below five to nearly twelve to £1 sterling, partly because no supplies could be obtained from Austria, partly in sympathy with the price of silver, partly owing to the incidence of the trading seasons, and other local causes. Its high proportion of silver, about 90 per cent., makes it of greater intrinsic value than ordinary silver token money; it is indeed more a commodity of facile use in barter than a medium of exchange.

Now the pre-war practice has been re-adopted of traders arranging for their own supply of dollars to be minted in Vienna ; they supply the silver and pay 10 per cent. of its value to cover costs and profit. The following little table gives an idea of the variations of the dollar and the price of silver during the last five years :

<i>Date</i>	<i>Price of silver in pence</i>	<i>Intrinsic value of the \$ (\$ to £ sterling) based on the price of silver</i>	<i>Market price at Addis Ababa (\$ to £ sterling)</i>
31 December, 1922	31 $\frac{1}{8}$	9.35	9.15
" " 1923	33 $\frac{7}{8}$	8.83	7.90
" " 1924	31 $\frac{1}{8}$	9.28	6.55
" " 1925	31 $\frac{1}{8}$	9.32	8.40
" " 1926	25	11.82	10.20

The price of dollars at Addis Ababa during 1927 has remained pretty constant at round about ten dollars to £1 sterling.

A further complication was, however, introduced last year into the currency question by Government action as regards the small change for the dollar, known as *piastres* or *tamuns*.

These little silver coins, about the size of a threepenny bit, are minted in Paris, and, from the point of view of silver contents, twenty or twenty-one are equivalent to a dollar. The correct legal tender is sixteen to the dollar, but it was never possible to obtain more than from eight to twelve, whether one changed dollars at a Government establishment or in the open market. So the Government issued a decree that anyone who was discovered exchanging *piastres* at a higher rate than sixteen to the dollar would be fined and imprisoned, with the result that *piastres* disappeared entirely from circulation and were practically unobtainable, to the immense inconvenience of the entire population in and around Addis Ababa.

A fresh supply was minted, with no better result. Whoever it is that gets the supplies retains the *piastres*, doles

them out in small quantities, and makes an excellent profit on the transaction. Queues of unfortunate native traders and others wait for hours outside the official "money-changer's" office in the hope of obtaining change for a single dollar, while the legations and other favoured individuals have to obtain a special permit to secure a minimum supply of *piastres* weekly !

The *piastres* arrive from Paris to the order of the Bank of Abyssinia, but this institution is not allowed to put them into circulation ; it hands them over to the Government, with the result described above.

## CHAPTER XXI

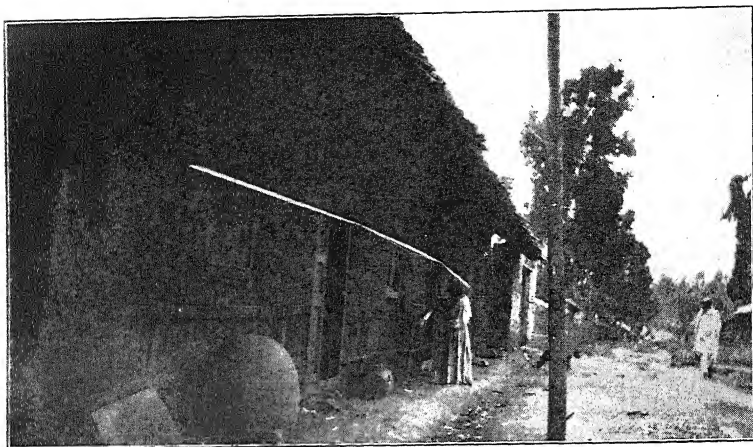
### DEVELOPMENT AND POSSIBILITIES (*continued*)

FROM the facts and instances which have been referred to above, it may be surmised that Abyssinia has some way to go yet before she can be regarded as one of the world's commercial or financial centres. But it would be foolish to imagine that the existing state of affairs will continue for ever, or indeed for very long.

The possibilities of Abyssinia as a field for commercial development have been studiously ignored by the larger European interests until to-day, and even now it does not seem to be at all generally realised how great a field is available, and how soon the time will come when this old country will be opened up to modern enterprise. The changes and developments which have taken place in Addis Ababa may not be very great as yet, but they are indicative of the inevitable trend of events.

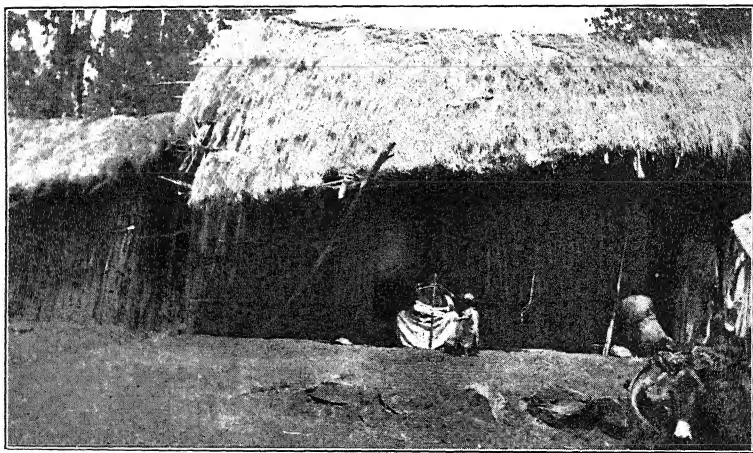
Superficial observers see only the ancient habits and customs of the country, the lack of proper administration, the difficulty of dealing with Abyssinian officials and Governors, and, with a shrug of the shoulders, they pass the country by as a hopeless commercial proposition.

They make, I venture to suggest, the mistake of putting the cart before the horse in the way of evolution—they insist that the country shall put its house in order, establish a proper system of administration, introduce financial and other reforms, and establish communications, prior to and as a condition of the entry of commercial enterprise, forgetting that the Abyssinian Government does not possess the financial and other resources necessary to enable it to carry out any of these works, and that it is only by



#### A COTTAGE INDUSTRY

In Addis Ababa. Winding cotton yarn (stretched along the outer wall of the "tukul") on to frames. In the foreground is a large "gombo" (earthenware jar) used for carrying liquids. The hut is a superior one, possessed of a door.



#### A COTTAGE INDUSTRY

In the country. Winding cotton yarn from frames on to bobbins. This hut is much more primitive.



commercial development that it can obtain the requisite means.

They also ignore, or perhaps they are unaware of, the steps which the Abyssinian Government, or rather, should I say, the Regent, has actually taken and is contemplating, within the limits of his present power and resources, to advance the position of the country.

It would be well if it were more fully realised what certain foreign Governments have already done to survey the land, "stake out their claims," and prepare for the day when there will undoubtedly be an Abyssinian "boom." For though that day will not eventuate in the immediate future, it will come sooner or later, and the influx of foreign enterprise and foreign capital will then assist and even compel the Abyssinian Government to carry out those internal reforms and improvements which critics of the country are demanding.

Other events affecting the external position of Abyssinia have been overshadowed by the much abused and greatly misunderstood Anglo-Italian agreement, which is fully described in a subsequent chapter; suffice it to say that on the part of Italy the objects are ostensibly entirely economic, and that by this agreement she hopes—probably too optimistically—that she has "staked out her claim" to one of the largest and richest districts of the country.

The visit of the Duke of the Abruzzi to Addis Ababa has probably served to dispel some of the suspicions entertained of the nature of Italy's ambitions, and the magnificent reception which the Duke was given must doubtless have gone some way to ease the tension between the two countries and pave the way for some sort of commercial arrangement on the lines of—though certainly not to the extent of—the hopes outlined in the agreement referred to above.

This visit, the first to be paid to Abyssinia's rulers by royal persons (if we except the official trips of such fallen stars as the late Prince Henry of Orleans in 1897 and the Grand Duke Alexander of Russia in 1926), was an event of



no small importance. It had been announced so long ago as July 1926, but in the following August it was "called off" on account of the heat engendered by the Anglo-Italian agreement which saw the light of day at about that time. The project was revived during the present year, and on the 25th April, accompanied by the Governor of Eritrea and a number of officials of the Italian foreign office, the Duke sailed from Naples on the warship *Venezia*.

He reached Jibuti on 15th May, and, after a series of receptions all along the line, his special train arrived at Addis Ababa on the 18th, where he was met at the station by Ras Tafari and an immense concourse of people and conducted to the Empress. The sight was a remarkable one; the Regent was arrayed in his imperial robes, surmounted by an Abyssinian crown, and many of the great chiefs were present adorned in their lion's-mane head-dresses and capes and other striking garments; a large reception-tent had been put up covering the arrival platform; the whole of the streets from the railway station to the palace were lined with troops and decked with flags; and owners of houses on the main roads were forced to have them roofed and whitewashed.

The Regent had caused a special building to be erected for the Duke in the grounds of his own palace, and a series of banquets, receptions, and other festivities filled in a crowded week, among which was a race-meeting organised for the occasion (at which it may be incidentally mentioned that the Empress's horses won four out of seven events), and a "march past" in their own peculiar method of from 50,000 to 100,000 Abyssinian warriors, chanting their war-songs and waving their weapons in salute as they passed the royal stand—it took them over three hours to do so.

The visit (on which the Abyssinians are reported to have spent no less than half a million dollars—about £50,000—an immense sum for them), passed off with much success amid glorious weather, and the Duke left the capital on 25th May, bearing with him many costly presents and the

highest Abyssinian decoration extant, after having made a tactful and well-arranged distribution of largesse among charitable and educational institutions in Addis Ababa.

So great was the influx of troops and people into Addis Ababa for the week's festivities (during which all business was suspended) that there was almost a famine among the poorer people in the town, and the price of flour rose from \$6 to \$13 per sack, when it could be got at all.

From this visit, taken in conjunction with the Italian aims outlined in the Anglo-Italian agreement, and the other activities of Italy in the Red Sea, it is fairly obvious that a "forward" policy is contemplated in that part of the world. The arrangement with the Emir of Sana whereby a large part of the trade of that principality is being diverted to Massawa; the establishment of a steamer service to collect merchandise from the Red Sea ports—Jibuti and others—and bring it to Massawa for transhipment there; the proposed developments in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland (to which the cession by England of Jubaland has added a useful port); the expansion of the very excellent Italian passenger steamer services to the East; and other interesting events, all point in the same direction; and if as one of the results a commercial and political *rapprochement* should take place between Italy and Abyssinia, leading to the undertaking of development schemes in the latter country, it can only be regarded as a subject of congratulation by all those interested in the prosperity and welfare of that land.

But whatever commercial success Italy may have secured—and there is little doubt but that something will be achieved—it is quite certain that she will not be allowed to monopolise commercially any appreciable part of Abyssinia, whatever self-denying ordinance England may have signed with her. A far more powerful aspirant for commercial honours in Abyssinia has now appeared in the field in the shape of the United States of America. Hitherto America has been represented in Abyssinia solely by a few missionary enterprises, more recently by the establishment

by the United Presbyterians of a large hospital in Addis Ababa. Imports from America (mainly cotton piece goods) have not been great ; and when the American Consul died in Addis Ababa before the war his place was not filled ; there being no American residents in Abyssinia, the interests of the few American subjects who visited the country were held to be adequately provided for by the good offices of the British Legation.

But the Regent, impressed with the wealth and power of the States, and feeling that he need be under no fear of territorial trouble from that far-off country inasmuch as there is no American territory along his borders, has always encouraged the visits of Americans and urged them to undertake operations in Abyssinia.

And now he has so far succeeded that the American Department of Commerce has issued an appeal during the present year to American capital to enter Abyssinia, "an almost virgin field for productive effort." It is also stated that an American Minister is shortly to be appointed to the Court of Ethiopia, doubtless to look after the interests of those American undertakings who may be induced to start operations there.

Now there may be difficulties in the way of visualising a rush of American capitalists to the Empire of the Negus (notably on account of the slavery question), and it would be foolish to build too much on too rapid a creation of American interests. But it is more than probable that there will be some move in this direction, especially as Americans are sure, from past experience and present assurances, of receiving more than "most favoured nation treatment" from the Regent and his Government.

Other countries are also in the field. For example, Holland despatched last year their able representative from Jedda to Addis, who negotiated a Dutch-Abyssinian commercial treaty, and it is contemplated that the appointment of a Dutch Minister will follow before long. The Japanese Consul from Port Said was in Addis in 1927

negotiating a similar instrument, to be followed doubtless by a further addition to the *corps diplomatique* at the Ethiopian Court.

Austria has recently also concluded a commercial agreement, and even Petrograd deputed a "learned Soviet professor" to study the agricultural possibilities of the country. Incidentally it may be said that Dr. Vavilov's report was extraordinarily enthusiastic; he is stated to have reported in glowing terms of the potentialities of Abyssinia in this direction, and to have indicated that its future lay in the development of agriculture.

A representative of powerful financial Czecho-Slovakian interests visited Abyssinia during the past twelve months with a view to reporting upon the commercial prospects; a Turkish representative has been appointed as *Chargé d'Affaires* and has arrived at Addis; and, last but not least, the Egyptian Government has decided upon the appointment of a Minister at Addis, though it may well be suspected that this move is rather from political than from commercial motives.

All this international activity can only mean that in the minds of at least some portion of the world possibilities are anticipated in Abyssinia; this amount of interest would hardly be manifested otherwise. And if these various contemplated developments materialise—some have already taken place—and if they are followed—as they are sure to be—by commercial activity on the part of solid interests among the nationals of the countries concerned, then, as I have already said, administrative and financial internal reform will be forced on the rulers of Abyssinia, willingly enough as far as the Regent is concerned, willy-nilly on the others.

It is quite true that this reform is long over-due, and that from the point of view of the spectator or of the unhappy individual sitting in Addis, trying to get things done, things seem much as they have always been.

Several minor efforts at reform have, however, been made  
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quite recently. One of the most vexed questions in the country is the lamentably defective system of judicial administration, and especially that part of it concerning the affairs of foreigners resident in the country. To deal with this a mixed court, presided over by an Abyssinian judge, assisted by the consular representative of the country of the national affected, was established. But this worked badly in practice for various reasons; *inter alia* the divergence of the laws of the different countries made it extremely difficult for the judges, for the case was and is apparently supposed to be tried by the law of the country of which the defendant is a national, a course which optimistically presupposes legal omniscience on the part of the Abyssinian judge.

Consequently the Regent has appointed Maître Auberson, a Swiss advocate, to act as "Counsellor to the Special Court." What his precise functions will turn out to be is not very clear, but presumably his main duty will be to advise the court, especially the Abyssinian judge, on points of foreign law. Whether Maître Auberson will prove to be a master of eight or ten different codes of law time alone can show.

Another form of reorganisation attempted is in connection with mining—a vexed question. Hitherto mining has mainly consisted of the obtaining of paper concessions generally by men of straw for the purpose of re-sale to more credulous and opulent new arrivals. Little actual mining has resulted; when it has, there has, as a rule, been trouble between different holders of the same concession or between the concessionaires and the Government, owing to the absence of any form of mining law and the loose and sometimes ridiculous way in which the concessions have been drafted.

The Regent has now appointed a German, Dr. Hesse—formerly Director of the Belgian alcohol monopoly in Abyssinia—to organise a mines department, draft mining laws, survey the mineral resources of the country, erect

laboratories, prepare a geological map of Abyssinia, and collect scientific data. To the department will also be attached a patent office, to deal with patents and trade-marks. An ambitious programme, especially to one familiar with the Abyssinian tendency to commence many things and to leave them uncompleted.

The Government has also made a start in the direction of raising funds for educational purposes. Since January 1926 a special educational tax equivalent to about .6 per cent. *ad valorem* on both imports and exports has been enforced, and it is estimated that this will bring in about \$240,000 a year, which, if properly spent, should produce quite good results—it is a large sum for Abyssinia, £24,000 at the present rate of exchange.

There is plenty of scope for it, for 99 per cent. of the population are illiterate.

It is true that, given the much more serious and far-reaching administrative defects, these efforts do not go very far—indeed, as yet it is probably true to say that they have not gone any way at all. But they are hopeful indications at least, and that they have not attracted more attention is probably due to the fact that too much was expected of Abyssinia after the events of 1923-24.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE : CONDITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

WHEN in September of 1923 Ethiopia was, perhaps somewhat prematurely, admitted to membership of the League of Nations, it was felt that once and for all she had abandoned the state of semi-mysterious isolation in which so much of her story had been passed ; and, with the appearance of Ethiopian delegates at Geneva, many earnest, albeit uninformed, persons seem to have expected that the latest recruit would perform miracles in the way of reform and improvement in the ancient Empire, merely as a result of its inclusion in the ranks of the world Powers.

That these extravagant hopes should have been disappointed was inevitable. The difficulties which have arisen were inherent in the position, though they have been brought to a head by recent events. Both hopes and difficulties were due in no small measure to the general ignorance prevailing in Europe of the conditions existent in Abyssinia, of its method of government and social state, of Abyssinian mentality, and even of the history of the country. This is perhaps not surprising, for until recently few Europeans have travelled in Abyssinia, fewer still have tried to study or understand the Abyssinian people, and hardly any can speak or read their somewhat difficult language. And yet some understanding of these factors is essential as a preliminary to dealing with the difficulties of Abyssinia's position in the League of Nations—the slavery problem, the thorny question of Lake Tana and the Blue Nile, and the future development of the country in relationship with the European Powers by whose territories it is entirely surrounded.

Ignorance of the customs of a country on the part of those who live or travel in it is not only lamentable, it may be dangerous, and is quite likely to lead to anti-foreign feeling. An instance of this occurred some years ago which certainly had this effect, according to a leading Abyssinian who told me of it.

A foreigner of distinction was riding through the town with his interpreter, and as he passed along a man standing by the roadside spat, a very common, indeed almost a universal, habit here among all classes. The man in question intended no insult, but the European chose to take it as such, complained to the Emperor, and the man was given forty lashes with the *girafa*, a terrible punishment. The man appears to have borne no grudge against the Emperor, but developed a violent anti-foreign bias, and the story, spreading through the town, is told even to-day as an example of foreign injustice.

It is not easy to understand these people, nor is it altogether a simple matter to grasp the conditions under which the country is run, and the position of affairs there. What, then, are the conditions existent in Abyssinia to-day?

Broadly speaking, there may be said to be three " Estates of the Realm " : firstly, the governing class, including the Empress, the Regent, and the Ministers and provincial Governors ; secondly, the Church ; and, thirdly, the people, including the Abyssinians themselves and the vast number of their subject races.

The Government of Abyssinia is an absolute monarchy, the social system a feudal one, based on serfdom and domestic slavery. That alone is a rather startling anachronism in the twentieth century. But in reality the actual working of Government is very much complicated by a variety of factors, and the absolutism of the monarchy is appreciably limited by reason of its double-headed nature—an Empress and a Regent ; also by the power of many of



the great nobles ; by the influence and wealth of the Church ; and by lack of financial resources.

Both Empress and Regent were nominated to their present positions by the assembled nobles (known as Rases) in September 1916, after the then Emperor, Lej Yasu, a mere boy, had been deposed for his vicious tendencies. The glory of Menelik, whose name is still regarded with almost religious veneration to-day, is reflected on the Empress, his daughter. She is held to embody the traditions of his reign, and commands the unswerving allegiance of those who were associated with him. Things are apt to be judged by the standard of "whether Menelik would have approved," and, unfortunately, the interpretation of this standard is largely in the hands of the older nobles, and of the representatives of the Church, who are not unnaturally opposed to innovations on European lines which must affect adversely their privileged positions.

The Regent, Ras Tafari, on the other hand, is a more remote relation of the great Emperor : he is the son of Ras Makonnen, a prominent soldier and diplomat, who was a grandson of King Sahala Sellassie, and thus Menelik's first cousin. Ras Tafari, who is also the Heir to the Throne, is an able and enlightened man, thirty-four years old, exceedingly anxious to further the development of his country on modern lines. He is supported by the more intelligent and by the educated Abyssinians—unfortunately a minority. His public spirit and sense of duty are very great. Possessed of immense estates in one of the most fertile provinces of the Empire, he could, if he chose—and he is eminently a peace-loving man—live a quiet and peaceful life amid his own folk in Harar. Instead of doing this, he elects to spend the whole of his time in the service of his country, working at Addis Ababa from seven in the morning until ten at night, exposed from within and without to criticism, opposition, and misunderstanding, and even to personal danger, for a plot to assassinate him was discovered and frustrated at the end of last year.



#### THE EMPRESS

H.I.M. Zauditu, G.C.M.G., Empress (Queen of Queens) of Ethiopia, daughter of the Emperor Menelik II. Her attire gives an impression of that of Queen Victoria, for whom she had a sincere admiration.



In the summer of 1924 he was able to undertake what had long been in his mind, a visit to the capitals of Europe. It must have required a good deal of courage to do this, for, in the first place, it was a complete innovation in the traditions of Abyssinia, no ruling prince having left the country since the legendary voyage of the Queen of Sheba. And, what was more important, there was always a danger that he might not be able to return, for the reactionary party do not love him, and the dispossessed Emperor Lej Yasu was still alive, though in confinement, and commanded a certain following in the country.

However, after a preliminary tour through various provinces of Abyssinia, he left home in April, and commenced his tour with a visit to Jerusalem, where for many years there has been a dispute raging as to the ownership of certain convents there known as the Holy Places, from which the Abyssinians claim that they have been unlawfully dispossessed.

The story of Abyssinia's claims in Jerusalem is an interesting one, and it is told in great detail by Mr. Alex Devine in an admirable little pamphlet which he has published lately entitled *Abyssinia and the Holy Places*.

From the documents which Mr. Devine has examined it appears that the Abyssinians occupying their church and convent in Jerusalem were decimated by plague in 1838, and that under the excuse of "disinfection" the Copts and Armenians induced the Turkish Governor to burn all the Abyssinian books and records, and then seized the buildings for themselves. The subsequent story of Russian agents, acting on behalf of the Abyssinian Government, searching Turkish official archives in Constantinople for missing documents wherewith to establish the Abyssinian claim, reads like a novel in the best style of detective fiction.

It is claimed that these papers have, in fact, been discovered, but, be that as it may, Ras Tafari succeeded in getting this question referred to a Committee of the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, with whom it is still *sub judice*.

Accompanied by a retinue of over twenty persons, including some of the most important chiefs of Abyssinia, he proceeded from Jerusalem to Cairo, and thence, via Alexandria and Marseilles, to Paris, where he was given a very magnificent reception, being met at the station by the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, and subsequently treated to displays of a military and other characters, including demonstrations by aeroplanes and tanks.

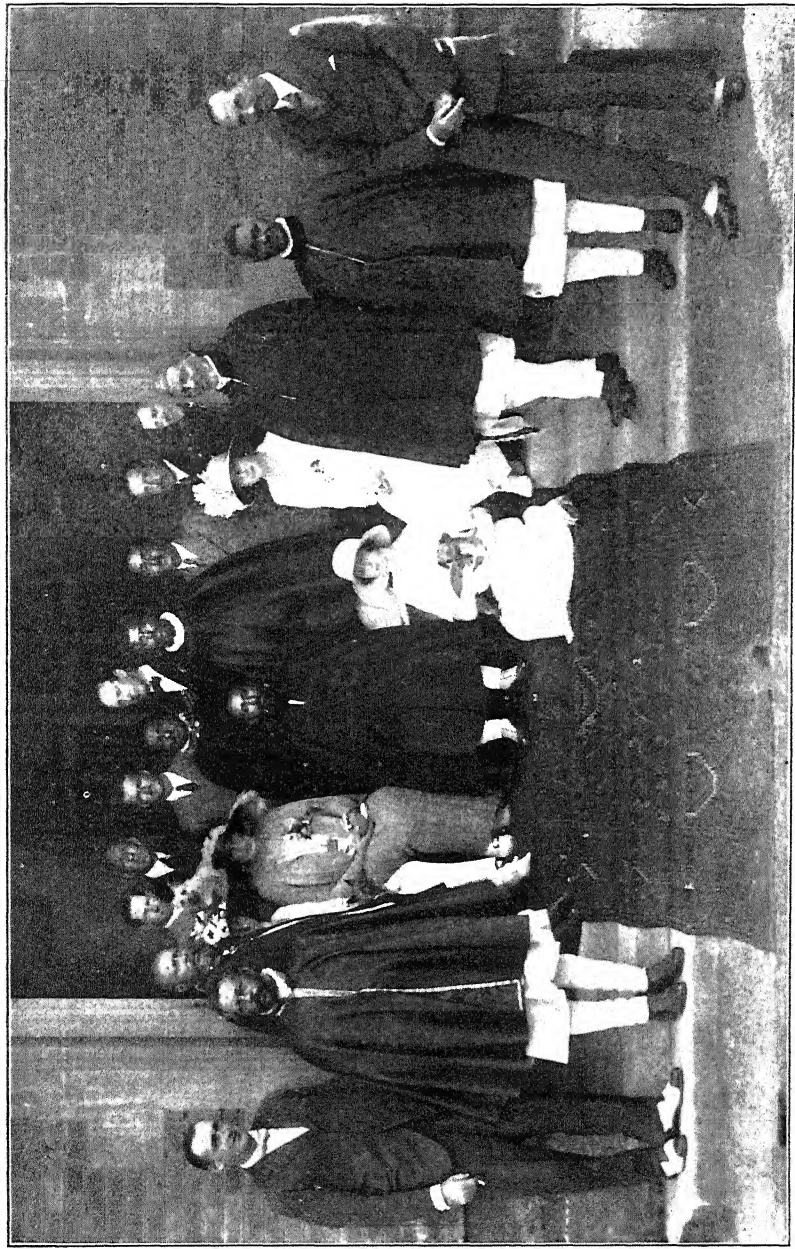
There followed visits to Belgium, Holland, Stockholm, Italy, and finally to England; Switzerland and Greece being included on the return route.

He was given a really extraordinary welcome on his return to Addis Ababa, being met at the station by no less a personage than the Abuna himself and everyone else of note in the capital; salutes were fired, addresses of welcome read from the Government and others, and he was driven through the town in an eight-horsed carriage and welcomed in state by the Empress. This expression of feeling, together with the calm which had prevailed during his four and a half months' absence, formed a significant tribute to the growing strength of his position.

A detailed account of the tour, very interesting for those who can read Amharic, was written by one of the members of his suite, a distinguished and erudite Abyssinian, Blata Heruy by name, and printed as a book at the Regent's own printing-press, set up in his palace grounds.

Unfortunately Ras Tafari was not able to point to any diplomatic triumphs as the result of the journey (*inter alia* the French had steadfastly refused to meet in any way the Abyssinian desire for a "free zone" or other special facilities at the port of Jibuti), and this fact, doubtless combined with the heavy cost of the tour, caused the appointment of a body of Ministers or advisers to check his activities later on, when the first enthusiasm aroused by the glamour of the tour had subsided.

Whether this arose from fear of commitments which might be entered into by the Regent, or from jealousy on



Whilst in England Ras Tafari was received by Sir John Ramsden at Bulstrode. From right to left the party consisted of :—*Seated* : Lady Ramsden, Miss Ramsden, H.I.H. Ras Tafari, Mrs. Backhouse, Mrs. Rev. Standing in *Front* : Sir J. Ramsden, Blata Heruy (Councillor of State), Dajazmach Mulu Geta (Minister of War), Dajazmach Gabra Sellassie (Governor of N. Tigre), Ras Nado (Governor of Gere), Mr. G. Buxton. *Standing at Back* : Mr. Ashton, the Author, Mr. Zaphiro (of the British Legation), Ras Hahu of Gojam, Mr. Finch-Hatton, Ras Seyum (late Governor of Tigre), Mr. Home (late Consul of N.W. Abyssinia), Colonel Backhouse, Mr. J. Ramsden.



the part of the great chiefs who had been left behind, or on the part of those who had accompanied him and did not consider that they had been brought sufficiently into the limelight whilst on tour, or from a combination of these causes, is not clear.

But it is quite certain that the great chiefs are not persons easily led or controlled, and that their power in the land is great.

The more powerful nobles are either governors of provinces or hold administrative posts in the capital. For the most part, they are possessed of, or control, great tracts of lands and thousands of slaves. Some of them can read and write, but that is about the extent of their educational equipment, though they are courteous and well mannered, and very pleasant to meet. Theirs is the class that placed the present rulers on the throne, and accordingly their views have to be treated with consideration, though unfortunately these views are not, as a general rule, of the most enlightened character.

The majority of them are indeed reactionary in view and antagonistic to any form of progress, a frame of mind which for men in their position, enjoying the privileges they do, is quite understandable. In some of the more remote districts the name of the ruler is scarcely known to the population, and the only recognised authority is the Governor. And though such a state of affairs may strengthen the position of this official, it does not make for the influence or prestige of the central Government. The position is well exemplified by the Abyssinian proverb, "A dog knows his master, but not his master's master."

The most striking among these strange feudal figures was undoubtedly the Fitawrari Habta Giorgis, one of Menelik's generals, who occupied the position of Minister of War and head of the army; it is a curious coincidence that this perfervid admirer of the Emperor should have died on the thirteenth anniversary of the death of his old master, the 12th December, 1926.



In addition to the vitally important posts that he held, he was one of the richest men in Abyssinia, possessing vast estates, ruling several immense provinces, and owning a private army of some 15,000 men, besides an equivalent number of slaves! It may be imagined that the rivalry among the remaining great ones of Abyssinia for the possession and control of his inheritance in lands and men is likely to prove keen, though the position is somewhat eased by the fact that some of his possessions have been bequeathed to the State, which is sadly in need of all the revenue it can get.

For, as might be expected in all the circumstances detailed above, the financial system of the country is far from satisfactory. The State revenues are mainly derived from the Customs duties, of which a proportion is "diverted" on its passage to the public coffers, and from internal taxation—the principal item of which is a form of tithe, supposed to be a levy equivalent to one-tenth of the production. These, and minor forms of revenue, do not, however, amount to very much, and the reason is not far to seek. The provincial Governors receive no salaries, and not unnaturally retain for themselves a large proportion of the receipts from their districts; the proportion remitted to the central Government varies inversely to the power of the Governor.

From the same class, mainly, though not entirely, are drawn the Ministers and the "Council of Elders and Advisers to the Crown" about twenty strong, and I fear that it cannot be said that these contribute much to the furtherance of the Regent's policy. The large majority of the Council come from the ranks of his political adversaries, and some recent ministerial appointments would seem to indicate that merit is no claim to advancement, and that none but willing tools of one faction or another need expect appointment.<sup>1</sup>

There seems to be a sort of fear lest the appointment of a strong and able man to a post of importance should lead to

<sup>1</sup> There is also a "Council of the Crown" consisting of the Empress as President, Ras Tafari, Ras Kassa, and the President of the Council of Elders.

undue ambition on his part ; when I was discussing this matter with a leading Abyssinian and asking whether a particular individual of marked ability was not likely to receive one of the high positions then vacant the reply was, " Oh, no, that would be dangerous ; he might want to make himself king."

And it is because of this lack of trust in each other and in their subordinates, and the non-appointment of the best men, that men like the Regent have to work so tremendously hard and busy themselves with a mass of comparatively unimportant detail that ought to be left to their underlings to carry out.

Closely allied in policy and ideas to this ruling caste is the Church, which occupies an astonishing position.

Its past history is sketched in another chapter, and also the means whereby in the Middle Ages no less than a third of the land of the country came into the possession of the Church. This provision has lasted until to-day, though the proportion of ecclesiastical territory is now perhaps a trifle less, possibly only one-fourth. As a result the Church owns vast territories and much wealth, and includes in its ranks as priests, monks, and debtera, a very large proportion—estimated by some writers to be as much as a quarter—of the male population. These individuals do no work and are profoundly ignorant ; they are recruited by the simple method of paying a dollar or two and being breathed on by the Abuna. It is therefore hardly astonishing that they are not to be found amongst the ranks of the Prince Regent's supporters.

Even those priests who can read are for the most part otherwise utterly uneducated, and they have caused a mass of superstition and legend to be wrongly overlaid on their religion during the passage of the years.

So, although the Abyssinians are immensely proud of the antiquity of their Church, and of the fact that they were Christians whilst we were worshippers of Thor and Odin, it cannot be described as a shining example of what a

Christian Church should be ; it must, moreover, be borne in mind that, though the Abyssinians properly so-called are Christians, the large majority of the population of the country are Muslim or pagan ; even in Addis Ababa itself, the centre of Abyssinian rule, there are reported to be as many as 10,000 followers of Islam—and Islam is making progress in the provinces both among Christians and pagans.

I have already described some of the more striking features of the Church ceremonial, but many of the practices which the Church inculcates and which the people follow blindly are no less bizarre, such as the method of mourning the dead, for example.

The mourning feast is called Taskar, and it is repeated at intervals on the seventh, twelfth, thirtieth, fortieth, and eightieth day after the death, also again six months, one year, and seven years afterwards. The seventh year Taskar is the great one, after which I gather that the enthusiasm wanes.

All sorts of priests, beggars, and cripples come into the grounds of the bereaved family on these occasions, and are liberally supplied with *talla* or *tej*, according to the means of the people concerned, with the inevitable result that after a while sobriety is not the most conspicuous quality of the mourners. I have myself run into a crowd of these people emerging from such an orgy, and they were not too pleasant to meet.

The connection with the parent Church of Alexandria has from the very beginning been maintained by the appointment from that see of a Coptic priest as head of the Abyssinian Church, known as the Abuna.

The origin of this practice and the reasons for it are explained elsewhere, and it may be added that, as the holder of the office exerts great power and influence, it is as well that he should not be identified with any particular party in Abyssinia, as would almost certainly be the case if he were a native of that country. The late Abuna Matewos was a very interesting and able man, though reactionary

in policy, and he was held in great esteem as one of Menelik's old people. He had crowned Menelik himself, and also the present Empress.

When he died in December last, at the age of eighty-three, the scenes in Addis Ababa, where he had lived for forty-seven years, were astonishing. The Regent, the *corps diplomatique*, and thousands of chiefs, followers, and slaves took part in the procession, the streets being thronged with dense masses of soldiers and people ; the cortège was headed by the gilded chair of the Archbishop, in which was a large oil-painting of him shielded by a coloured ceremonial umbrella. The body, covered with an embroidered cloth, was carried by monks, hundreds of priests following in their striking robes, with embroidered umbrellas and long praying sticks.

Although the route was only half a mile long, the procession took nearly four hours to cover it, so dense were the throngs, and so elaborate the ceremonial ; the Empress in person met the body at the church, where it was temporarily deposited pending formal interment in some suitable sanctuary.

The question of the appointment of a successor has been agitating all minds in Addis Ababa ; the more advanced element desired to free themselves from this semblance of a foreign overlordship by breaking with tradition and appointing an Abyssinian. The old and orthodox party have, however, carried the day, and it was understood that a communication had already been sent to Egypt asking for a new nominee.

Much depends on the character of the man appointed to this post. A strong man of enlightened views and political insight might do much to lift the Church out of the rut into which it has fallen, and disarm its hostility and that of the class of ruling chiefs to the reforms desired by the Regent. But if another reactionary is to come on the scene, then there must be further difficulties in the way of progress, which the Church and the big chiefs have already done so much to arrest.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE : CONDITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS (*continued*)

VERY different from the position of the ruling classes and of the Church as described in the preceding chapter is that of the people. Their racial characteristics and distribution in the country have already been referred to in the early part of the present volume ; as to their number, it is impossible to do more than give a very rough and approximate estimate, for there has never been any numbering of the people ; it is probable that a figure of eight or nine millions is within a reasonable distance of the facts.

This mass of people has of course no say whatever in the Government of the land, and indeed the majority of them, being in the status of subject races, have very little say in anything.

Practically all the various peoples composing the population are illiterate and uneducated, and outside Addis Ababa (even many within that town) live very much as their ancestors have always lived. Their dwellings are rude, one-room, circular huts, sometimes of stone, more often of reeds and mud, thatched with grass ; their food is mainly bread made of *teff*, a sort of millet, varied by orgies of raw meat occasionally provided by their feudal overlords, of which form of delicacy they are inordinately fond ; their occupation is agriculture and cattle-raising.

And yet, subject as they are to the whims of their provincial governors and sub-governors, and living a pretty rude and simple life, I beg leave to express some doubt as to whether the blessings of civilisation and education would really make them very much happier, apart of course from

those serfs and *gabars* in districts administered by the more unreasonable type of governor.

They are at present a pleasant and cheerful race, at least, so I have found such as I have come in contact with ; more intelligent than the average African, the peasants, farmers, and *nagadis* (merchants) are on the whole an industrious and worthy population, although the soldiers and retainers of the big chiefs, of whom there are large numbers, are a pretty worthless crowd.

That education will sooner or later spread amongst them of course goes without saying, but at the present moment, with the exception of the Government school at Addis Ababa, the school recently established there by the Regent, which I have described fully elsewhere, and a few missionary enterprises, there is nothing at all in the way of educational facilities.

It is not easy to see how any general provision of such facilities is to be set going, for missionary schools, a natural starting-point, are not regarded with too favourable an eye.

Missionary work in Abyssinia is another example of the lasting effect of the mistakes which Europeans have made in the past in dealing with this country. The Abyssinians are, as already pointed out, Christians ; and whatever views the other branches of the Christian Church may hold as to the merits or demerits of the particular form of belief indulged in by the Abyssinians, these are convinced that their own is the proper one and that all others are inferior brands. Consequently they have always looked askance at the efforts of representatives of other Churches in their country—a perfectly natural point of view.

This attitude is the more understandable when one reads of the terrible troubles created by the Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century, who, when their efforts for the conversion of the country were in sight of success after half a century's work, saw it all undone by national sentiment, and, furious at their defeat, incited rebellion and civil war in the effort to re-establish the dominance of Rome.

The result was that they were expelled from the country, and no others were allowed in for many years ; then again the Protestant missionaries were expelled in 1838, and there were further difficulties in 1863.

Menelik allowed missions to return, and now there are at work the British and Foreign Bible Society, the United Presbyterian Church of North America (which has established a hospital and is doing admirable medical work), two Swedish Protestant Societies, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and one or two French Roman Catholic Agencies. Their staffs are small, and their work is mainly concentrated in and around the capital.

These various missions do a certain amount of educational work, but not a great deal ; their curriculum is suitable only for training youths to be interpreters, and thus their contribution to the problem of the education of the masses is not as yet of much value.

Unfortunately dogmatic religion rather than useful education seems to be the aim of at least some of them, if one may judge from the tone of a letter printed in a newspaper and addressed by the head of the mission to his superior " Monseigneur." In it he pleads for funds to establish a school at Addis Ababa, not, be it noted, to help Abyssinia or to encourage education, but he says "*cette école a pour objet d'aider à combattre la propagande Protestante dont les ravages à la capitale sont affreux.*" And he goes on to speak of the missionary exponents of other creeds not as fellow-workers in a great and difficult field of enterprise, but as "*nos adversaires.*"

For these and other reasons it is unlikely that any educational system that may be evolved in Abyssinia would be hitched on to the missions, or that it would receive any help from the Abyssinian Church—suspicion and reaction would militate against either of these courses.

And the great difficulty in the way of the introduction of education by any other means is the lack of adequate financial resources on the part of the Government.

The small though very admirable beginning made by Ras Tafari is a step in the right direction, but it is difficult to see how this can be developed on anything like a large scale until the Government have put their financial house in order, a proceeding which would involve the reform and reorganisation of the whole of the central and local administration, which is hardly likely to be undertaken in a hurry.

Nor is it clear that there is any real general demand for education within the country in spite of the statements which have been made to the contrary. The big chiefs do not want their sons to be educated; one of the most important remarked the other day in reply to a question as to why he would not send his sons to be trained in Europe or have a European tutor for them, "No, I will not have my sons taught these things, for when they have learned them, they will also have learned to despise their father."

And the sons themselves of wealthy chiefs do not care about learning either; they are the least keen of all the boys at Ras Tafari's school. They like to learn English or French, but beyond that they say they need to know nothing—they have their fathers' lands to inherit and to rule, and ample wealth at their disposal, what more do they want? Whereas their less fortunately endowed brothers at the school, having more incentive, acquire more, and when they grow up and realise that theirs is the knowledge, but that the power is in the hands of others, less capable and more reactionary, and they begin to appreciate the disabilities under which the country labours with its incubus of ecclesiasticism and reactionary aristocracy, one of two alternatives may well eventuate. Either a serious social upheaval will take place, with the attendant risk to Abyssinian independence of civil war, or reaction will so assert itself that a collision with the outside world becomes inevitable.

Ras Tafari of course realises this; his speech on the  
ON



occasion of the opening of his own school is singularly far-sighted. In the course of it he said, "The time was passed for mere lip-service to their country. The crying need of our people is education, without which we cannot maintain our independence. The proof of real patriotism is to recognise this fact and—in case of those who possess the means—to found schools and to forward the cause of education in every way. Progress had to be made little by little. I have built this school as a beginning and as an example, which I appeal to the wealthy among the people to follow."

He does everything he can to stimulate a desire for learning and to gratify it; he pays out of his own pocket not only for his school, but also for the education abroad of a number of youths, most of whom are in Paris.

Unfortunately a short course in a European capital for a youth, after his character and mentality have been to a great extent formed on the home model, is of comparatively little value. The youth learns a little and fancies himself an expert, and so really becomes rather a danger than a help in his own country. The true function of education, that of character formation, and the necessity of prolonged training before a man can be capable of becoming a doctor, a lawyer, an administrator, or an engineer, for example, are ideas which have yet to be grasped by the Abyssinian mind, even by the most enlightened among them. In the words of one of their own people, "they like to build from the top."

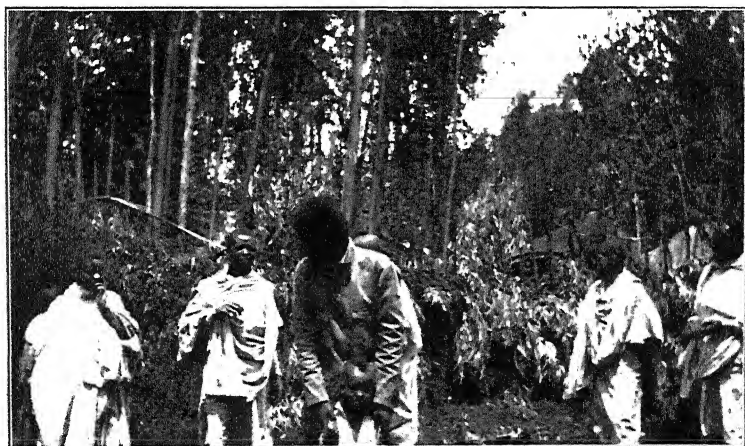
The visit of the Phelps-Stokes education commission to Addis Ababa in 1924 would, it was hoped by many, have provided a useful stimulus to educational effort in Abyssinia, but nothing has so far resulted.

The members of the mission were unfortunately only able to spend a very few days in Abyssinia, all of which time was passed at the capital, but some interesting, albeit somewhat indefinite proposals, were contained in their report, which was of an optimistic—possibly a too optimistic—character.



#### IN ADDIS ABABA

The bed of the Kabana River, spanned by a European-built bridge, at the height of the dry season. In the rains this is filled from bank to bank.



#### AN UNWILLING VICTIM

The small boy objected strongly to the camera on which we wished to record his curious style of head-dressing; the head is shaved save for a narrow strip down the middle.



In spite of the shortness of their stay, they had evidently appreciated the suspicion with which foreign effort was regarded, for, after referring thereto, the Report went on to say :

“ In view of such well-founded suspicions, it is obvious that foreigners who approach the people should give evidence of sincere interest in Abyssinia. The beginnings should be small but genuine, and directly related to the needs of Abyssinian communities.”

They based their hopes for the future mainly on the personality of Ras Tafari, but he, no less than the foreigner, has to deal with these “ well-founded suspicions ”—one of the greatest obstacles to progress in the country.

The Abyssinians are an intensely proud and suspicious race, disliking the foreigner and his innovations, but withal exceedingly polite and courteous, both to each other and to strangers.

It would be difficult to give a better illustration of these national attributes of pride of their country and suspicion of others than is contained in the Emperor Menelik's letter to the Great Powers in 1901. In it occurs the following striking passage :

“ En indiquant aujourd'hui les limites actuelles de mon Empire je tâcherai, si le bon Dieu veut m'accorder la vie et la force, de rétablir les anciennes frontières de l'Ethiopie jusqu'à Khartoum, et jusqu'au Lac Nyanza avec tous les pays Gallas. Je n'ai point l'intention d'être spectateur indifférent si les puissances lointaines se présenteront avec l'idée de se partager l'Afrique, l'Ethiopie ayant été pendant plus de quatorze siècles une île des chrétiens au milieu de la mer des païens. Comme le Tout-Puissant a protégé l'Ethiopie jusqu'à ce jour, j'ai la confiance qu'il la protégera et l'aggrandira aussi dans l'avenir. Mais je suis certain qu'il ne partagera jamais l'Ethiopie entre d'autres puissances. Auparavant la limite de l'Ethiopie était la mer. A défaut de force et

à défaut de l'aide de la part des chrétiens notre frontière du côté de la mer est tombé entre les mains des musulmans. Aujourd'hui nous ne prétendons pas retrouver notre frontière de la mer par force ; mais nous espérons que les puissances, conseillées par notre Sauveur Jésus Christ, nous rendront les frontières de la mer, au moins sur quelques points de la côte."

The same spirit reappears a quarter of a century later in a letter addressed by the Regent himself, in 1926, to the League of Nations in connection with the Anglo-Italian Agreement. Referring to the Abyssinian people, he says :

" Throughout their history they have seldom met with foreigners who did not desire to possess themselves of Abyssinian territory and to destroy their independence. But with God's help, and thanks to the courage of our soldiers, we have always, come what might, stood proud and free upon our native mountains."

And, looking at the matter from quite another point of view, it is not in the least surprising that the good folk in and around Addis Ababa especially should regard the alien invaders with disfavour ; they have had a pretty bad experience of them. The majority of the so-called Europeans settled in the country from Menelik's time until recently are, with a few notable exceptions, the most unfortunate representatives of the white race which it would be possible to imagine from the point of view of impressing the native mind.

Drawn from the ranks of Armenians and other Levantine races, they have for the most part done nothing but harm to the name of the white race. They cringe to the great chiefs and hector their underlings, they follow a code of morals and a standard of living which is no higher than that of the natives, and are pretty generally and cordially disliked. That would not matter so much ; but the more unfortunate aspect of the case is that the Abyssinian proletariat who rub shoulders with these folk, and do not come so much into

contact with the fewer decent and more recently arrived Europeans, lump all Westerners together and judge them all from those they know, thus producing a misleading and disastrous idea of European standards and mentality.

A resident of the capital in Menelik's day told me that an Armenian had sold the Emperor the first engine seen in the country, and had told him that the cost of the machine was 50,000 dollars. Later on Menelik discovered that the real cost had in fact been 10,000 dollars, and, in the drastic and direct method which characterised him, he promptly had the fraudulent salesman chained to a slave for two years. At the end of this period the man was released, and by way of enjoying his regained liberty poisoned his wife and was shot by one of his own relations.

I have seen something of this sort of thing myself, and was not surprised, though extremely sorry, to learn that some of the Abyssinian chiefs, impressed by Levantine commercial "shrewdness," were employing some of them as "advisers" for their trading operations, thus tending to lower the already not very enlightened ideas of commercial morality prevalent in the country.

The Armenians are not the only offenders in this respect ; some of the other Levantine races are very much on a par with them ; but, lest it be thought that my judgment of them is too harsh, I would quote the following expression of opinion of a well-known writer on, and traveller in, those parts of the world. Speaking of Armenia, he says, "The more enlightened individuals of that harassed and harrying little nation admit that the Armenian character could be considerably improved, and that, though their hideous persecution is indefensibly damnable, their covetous instincts and parasitic activities are an incentive to ill-treatment."

One can therefore understand, and to some extent sympathise with, the views of the old reactionaries like the late Fitawrari Habta Giorgis, who could see no good in the encouragement of foreigners and their ways, and desired

that his country should be left alone in peace and solitude to work out its own salvation in its own way.

This frame of mind is the more understandable when it is realised how great is the hold that religion and superstition have on them, and how difficult this renders the reception of new ideas.

How hard the old ideas die even among the more enlightened members of the governing class may be gathered from the following incident. A distinguished Abyssinian who had previously been to Europe came to see me one day dressed in a coarse cotton *shamma* of doubtful cleanliness. As he was usually distinguished by the spotless cleanliness of his attire, and the fineness of his *shammas*, we were rather surprised, but later on in the conversation he himself introduced the subject and explained the reason for his lapse. "I am going to a big meeting," he said, "of ministers and chiefs; if I went there in fine clothes so soon after the death of Fitawrari Habta Giorgis, they would say that I did not love the Fitawrari, and that would be bad."

On another occasion a man of similar standing looked with some surprise at the red parasol my wife was using. "Only the Empress," he said, "is allowed to use a parasol of that colour; it is all right for you because you are a foreigner, but if you were an Abyssinian lady you would be shut up." And he added as an after-thought, "Has the King of England any special colour of umbrella reserved for himself?"

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ABYSSINIA'S DIFFICULTIES : SLAVERY AND OTHERS

THE briefest consideration of the picture revealed by the foregoing sketch of the prevailing conditions will show how extremely difficult is the task of the Regent. Invested theoretically with absolute powers of government, he is in fact faced with opposition and obstruction from all the most powerful elements in the country ; willing as he may be, and undoubtedly is, to advance on modern lines, he is practically powerless to set the pace. If ever there was a one-man country, it is Abyssinia at the present time.

In these circumstances it is scarcely surprising that all the hopes of progress entertained when Abyssinia was admitted to membership of the League of Nations should not have been fully realised. The admission of Abyssinia to the League in 1923 had, unfortunately, been preceded by a series of attacks on Abyssinia of a somewhat exaggerated nature in the British Press on the ground of the existence of slavery and of slave-raiding. The atmosphere at Geneva was accordingly not the most favourable for calm consideration of the request for Abyssinia's admission, a request which was supported principally by France, for reasons which can be readily understood. The two main stipulations governing admission to the League are, first, that the State seeking admission is a fully independent entity, and, secondly, that it can carry out its international obligations. Technically, Abyssinia may have been held to comply with these stipulations, but, to anyone having any real knowledge of the country, it was perfectly obvious that she certainly did not satisfy the second.



On 28th September, 1923, Abyssinia became a member of the League, subject, it is true, to certain conditions which, stripped of their verbiage, may be condensed for all effective purposes, so far as the slavery question is concerned, into the obligation "to secure the complete suppression of slavery in all its forms, and of the slave trade by land and sea."

To anticipate such a result was to expect the Regent to carry out a revolution. For revolution it would indeed have been. Imagine, for example, the then Minister of War and head of the army being "peacefully persuaded" to forgo the facilities provided by his 15,000 slaves. But the League evidently held the pious belief that the millennium would dawn shortly in Abyssinia, as did a large portion of the Press, one publication appearing with the headline: "No more slaves in Abyssinia."

The Regent no doubt sincerely believed, or at least hoped, that a measure of reform adequate to satisfy the League was possible. The guarantee of independence for the country involved by membership of the League, the international "kudos" attaching to the recognition of Abyssinia as a world Power, might, he thought, induce his stiff-necked compatriots to embark on the unpalatable course of slavery reform, especially after he had taken a number of them to the principal capitals of Europe, where they were fêted by kings, presidents, and prime ministers, and were shown all that was most striking in modern development. He issued admirable edicts, and undoubtedly worked hard to convert his countrymen—but the result so far has been disappointing. To appreciate the reasons for this a proper understanding of the Abyssinian mentality on the slavery question, and also of the forms which slavery takes in Abyssinia, is essential.

The Abyssinian maintains that the Bible contains no prohibition of slave-owning, and they point out that Moses commanded the Israelites to enslave their prisoners and make them work. "We were followers of the Mosaic

religion before we became Christians," one of them said to the writer, "and we only did what Moses taught." This view is borne out by a communication of the Empress Zauditu to the British Government in 1923, in which she says: "The reason why some men were declared slaves was that certain nations were at war with us, and this had caused money to be spent which those nations had to repay by their labour, and this also, that they might learn virtue by communications with Christians"—a pleasing form of "reparations" which Abyssinians assured the writer was merely what we ourselves did—or tried to do—in the Great War.

The different forms taken by slavery in Abyssinia may be summarised as slave-trading and raiding, domestic slavery, and serfdom. As regards the questions of slave-trading or slave-raiding, it may be said at once that they have been very greatly reduced, and now exist only sporadically and on an exceedingly small scale. The penalty for engaging in the trade is death, and this was re-enacted in a proclamation issued jointly by the Empress and Regent in 1923. The Governor of the country where the offence is committed must pay a fine of 1,000 Maria Theresa dollars in respect of each enslaved person, and the headmen or chiefs of the district 500 dollars each, one-third of the fine going to the informer.

The following is a literal translation of a decision of Ras Tafari, given me by the Regent himself, dealing with a case of slave-raiding under the above-mentioned edict:

"Traduction d'un permis délivré par Son Altesse Imp. Ras Téféri pour la libération d'un esclave.

"Le nommé Tchalémou, d'origine Wollamo, a été volé par des vendeurs d'esclaves et a été arrêté dans le pays de Har Amba Emmé Mehrette lorsqu'on l'y avait emmené pour vendre, les vendeurs d'esclaves ont en outre opposé une résistance acharnée à la police, qui a fait en cette

circonstance tout son devoir et consenti des sacrifices jusqu' à risquer sa vie.

" En conséquence, les vendeurs d'esclaves sont condamnés à la peine capitale, et l'homme qui avait été destiné à la vente a reçu de nous, de notre propre volonté, ce permis qui lui donne la plénitude de sa liberté.

" Addis Ababa,

" *Le 28 Juin, 1925.*"

Nevertheless these practices must persist to some extent, however small, for Abyssinian or Galla slaves are stated to be sold in the markets of the Hejaz, and periodical raids still take place from Abyssinia across the Sudan and Kenya frontiers, though to a diminishing extent. True it is that these raids are undertaken primarily for the purpose of obtaining cattle or ivory, but a few women and children are generally carried off at the same time. The Government of Kenya is obliged to incur an expenditure of £40,000 a year on the maintenance of frontier outposts to prevent raids from Abyssinia, and last year there was quite a battle between one of these outposts and a party of Abyssinians who had raided over the border and looted 5,000 camels from the Gabbra tribe.

The Sudan Government reports issued in 1924, 1925, and 1926 all contain references to inroads into the Sudan by raiders and bands of armed poachers, leading in some cases to the recall of the local Governors—at the instance of the British Government—by the Abyssinian Government, which, between the activities of unruly provincial officials and those of *shiftas* who infest the low-lying frontier districts, has no easy task. Lack of communications also increases the difficulties of Government control, and in the rainy seasons whole tracts of country are quite impassable.

The main issue is, however, the question of domestic slavery—an almost universal institution in Abyssinia, on which the whole social system of the country rests. Every household has its slaves, from the thousands owned by the

great landed proprietors to the single slave of the comparatively poor man. Slaves are owned by the servants of many European households in Addis Ababa, not excepting some of the foreign legations. Indeed, it is difficult to distinguish slaves from their owners ; they are clothed, fed, and housed in the same way as their masters ; they are, on the whole, well treated, frequently rise to positions of importance, and, generally speaking, their lot is not a very hard one. The position was accurately summarised by the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs when this matter was recently under discussion in the House of Commons. He said : " There are forms of slavery or servitude which, however repugnant to our ideals, at all events are not susceptible of the description of being grossly oppressive, and I think that to a very large extent the slavery which undoubtedly exists in Abyssinia belongs to that comparatively mild type."

The problem of the disposal of the slaves if and when freed is no easy one. A distinguished Abyssinian of advanced ideals, a cultured and broad-minded man, recently freed his own slaves ; they seemed mildly interested, but refused firmly to depart from the precincts where they had lived quite happily for many years. They were consequently told they could remain, and were fed as usual, receiving also a small monthly wage. But they declined firmly to do any work except at such times as the spirit moved them, for, as they pointed out, what was the good of being free if they had to work ?

An effort has been made to establish a school for freed slaves where they could be taught to work and cultivate the soil, so that eventually they might be able to earn their own living. Financial assistance was promised from this country, but, owing to local difficulties and objections, the project has not so far materialised, in spite of the personal interest of the Regent. This idea appears to have some connection with a body recently started in Addis Ababa by what may be described as the " Young Abyssinian Party." The institution is known as the " Love and Service Mahbar " (or

Association), and the ostensible object is to help and elevate those most in need of assistance, such as children and slaves, by means of schools and otherwise. The Regent has given them \$4,000, the Empress \$2,000, and efforts were being made to raise further subscriptions, with some success.

For the Abyssinians themselves to abolish an institution which from time immemorial has existed in their country, and which forms an integral part of its social organisation, is a task of immense difficulty, far more difficult than for an alien race to do so in a conquered country such as in the case of Europeans in their Colonies.

The Regent is doing his best, but he necessarily bases his hopes largely on the result of educational effort, in which he hopes for assistance from the more advanced nations of the world. Let us trust he will succeed, but it will take a long time.

Very much more to be pitied than the domestic slaves are the great numbers of *gabars*—for which the term serf would be the nearest English equivalent—who, though nominally free men, live for the most part under deplorable conditions. These are some of the Galla and other conquered tribes whose provinces are governed and policed by Abyssinian officials and soldiers, and who are allotted to their overlords, in hundreds to the big men and in twos and threes to the soldiers. They live on their own soil, but have to supply their masters' requirements in the way of food, wood, or labour, to the utmost possible—or impossible—extent, according to whether the Governor is a more or less reasonable individual.

To abolish the system of domestic slavery outright would be an impossibility; to attempt to do so would plunge the country into civil war and anarchy forthwith. Even to attempt to make a beginning by giving too drastic effect to the decree that children born of slaves should be free would be hotly resisted, for that would be to cut off all fresh supplies, now that slaves cannot be bought or sold and

raiding has been reduced to very small proportions. Without their slaves Abyssinians, from the Empress downwards, would be deprived of their amenities—from the great State banquets at the palace, where thousands are fed on raw meat, to the every-day labour of fetching water for the smallest hut from the rivers and wells. It is necessary to “hasten slowly” in this matter, for, as the greatest African administrator of our day has said in dealing with the evils of slavery: “If we are to legislate to any purpose, we must not be content with denouncing them as anachronisms, or as contrary to Christian principles. They may be both, but they exist. It is not a question of what we would like to do, but of what we can do, to abate an evil without causing more mischief than we can cure.”<sup>1</sup>

People are apt to talk and write in connection with the slavery question in Abyssinia as if there were no slaves to be found in any other part of the world. They forget that the abolition of slavery is of comparatively recent date, and that even in the British dominions, than which no finer examples of administration are to be found in the world's history, it has only been possible to proceed by gradual steps to the elimination of this evil, in spite of the power and wealth and the determination of the authorities. In the Sudan, for example, the Governor-General's latest report shows that, while slave-raiding is a thing of the past, they have only just succeeded in bringing the various forms of “domestic slavery” into adjustment with new ideas, and the report adds that “the policy of not forcing the pace unduly had been completely justified.” In Burma the Government has only this summer caused the freeing of some 4,000 slaves held by some of the tribes, and was about to take steps to suppress finally the practice of human sacrifice, which was still in vogue in certain of the remote districts.

To deal with the *gabar* system would involve difficulties little less in magnitude. For, as has been pointed out, the

<sup>1</sup> Sir F. Lugard in *The Dual Mandate*, p. 376.

provincial governors receive no salaries, and therefore they are dependent for their own remuneration, and for feeding, clothing, and paying their very numerous followers, on what they can extort from the people under their control. The obvious course would be to substitute a system of fixed salaries for the present method, but for such a scheme money would be required, and this is not available, nor could it be under the present administrative system. For Abyssinia, although naturally and potentially a wealthy country, is in fact poor, and the financial resources available for governmental purposes are of the slenderest.

To those who knew the country it was absurd to expect that anything very immediate or drastic in the way of reform was likely to be effected in present circumstances, though the Regent was generally and rightly credited with the best of desires and intentions. Nevertheless, complaints as to the non-fulfilment of "obligations entered into" are being raised, and various wholly impracticable coercive measures have been suggested. But, as was pointed out by the Under-Secretary of State, the League is really powerless in the matter, short of employment of force through one of its members, a course of action which—to put it mildly—is in the highest degree improbable.

It does not follow from this that there is nothing to be done and that matters should, or are indeed likely to, remain in their present position.

Enough has been said in the preceding chapters to show that the infiltration of new ideas, although painfully slow to the European mind, is actually proceeding, and it is certain that the various beginnings made by the Regent will bear fruit sooner or later. The slavery question is not the only problem facing Ras Tafari; and the danger is lest by a well-meant and generous effort to press matters forward unduly fast—unduly for Abyssinian standards that is—internal difficulties may be created for the Regent and his position weakened; whereas the best that can happen to Abyssinia to-day is that Ras Tafari, who is still young,

should be able to continue to direct the gradual progress of the nation by easy stages until there are more general signs that a larger section of Abyssinians support him and his ideas than is at present the case. It is probable that he will need all his ability in the near future.



## CHAPTER XXV

### AT THE CROSS-ROADS

THERE seems little doubt but that Abyssinia is rapidly approaching, if indeed she has not already reached, a stage where momentous decisions involving her future status in the world must be taken.

There are a number of problems to be dealt with which demand a high degree of statesmanship if they are to be solved satisfactorily, and it is difficult to see where in present circumstances this statesmanship is to be found.

The development of the country's latent resources, the ever-recurring boundary troubles with neighbouring states, the utilisation of the waters of Lake Tana, the requirements of the League of Nations (and indeed of the civilised world) with regard to the slavery and *gabar* questions, and the question of foreign (especially Italian) interests in the country are all questions of first-rate magnitude, any one of which must sooner or later lead to trouble if not adequately dealt with.

It was presumably open to Abyssinia if she so desired to close her frontiers to all foreigners and foreign interests, to remain in the seclusion of her mountain retreats—"the world forgetting, by the world forgot"—and to ignore the march of progress and advancement. But she did not elect to follow this course. On the contrary, Menelik's start in the direction of introducing European innovations into his country has been followed and surpassed by his successors, until to-day Abyssinia has been admitted to membership of the League of Nations and claims to stand on an equal footing with the Great Powers of the World.

But this claim is inadmissible, and indeed Abyssinia's

existence as a separate, independent entity under modern conditions is difficult, unless Abyssinia is itself prepared to advance whole-heartedly along modern lines, and to accept the obligations this entails, as well as the privileges it confers.

The country is rich in latent resources which are hitherto undeveloped ; the world, poorer in all things since the Great War, demands the utilisation of all available supplies and resources of foodstuffs, minerals, and raw materials. Abyssinia is herself unable to develop these by reason of lack of capital, experience, and knowledge ; she has not hitherto been prepared to allow others to do so. It is surely obvious that means must be found whereby these resources, while primarily adding to the prosperity of Abyssinia herself, can be utilised in the common welfare. Failure to do this must, sooner or later, lead to international difficulties of no mean order.

Again, it is intolerable that a country claiming to be one of the community of nations should so inadequately control its frontiers as to allow continual raids to take place into the territories of neighbouring States, whereby cattle, ivory, and even inhabitants are forcibly carried off. Reference has already been made to the difficulties of the Kenya and Sudan Governments in this connection ; great patience has been shown in this matter, but it is one that cannot be allowed to drift interminably.

The main question with which Great Britain is concerned is the regulation of the outflow of water from Lake Tana down the Blue Nile in the interests of the irrigation of Egypt and the Sudan.

For nearly thirty years this question has been under discussion, a question which in the ordinary way should not have taken thirty weeks to settle. Here is no matter of territorial expansion, of frontier rectification, or even of disputed fact. Briefly stated, the position is as follows.

The Blue Nile takes its rise a hundred miles or so south of Tana, runs into and through the lake, and, emerging in the south-east, runs south for one hundred and fifty miles,

then west, and finally, making a great bend northwards, joins the White Nile near Khartoum, bringing down with it not merely a vast volume of water, but immense quantities of rich fertilising mud, which, spread over the plains of Egypt, are the main factor in producing the agricultural wealth of the country.

During seven months of the year the water flowing down the Blue Nile is more than adequate for the irrigation needs of the Sudan ; during the remaining five months the water-supply is inadequate for this purpose. And under present conditions Lake Tana gives its greatest contribution to the Blue Nile whilst the river in Egypt and the Sudan is amply supplied from other sources ; it gives least when the river is low.

It is proposed, therefore, by erecting a dam across the exit of the Blue Nile from Lake Tana, to regulate the out-flow, to store up the surplus water during the seasons of plenty against the intervening lean months when water is lacking.

The erection of this dam would of course necessitate the transport of a very considerable amount of material, plant, and machinery to the site, and this could only be effected by the construction of a railway or motor road from the Sudan frontier to the lake ; it is, in fact, the road that it is proposed to make.

This work would involve the expenditure of large sums of money in Abyssinia, and would in that and other ways benefit that country as well as the Sudan and Egypt. So important indeed is the project from the point of view of Egypt and the Sudan that in a Treaty made with the Emperor Menelik in 1902 it is specifically provided by Article III that :

“ The Emperor Menelik engages not to construct or allow to be constructed any work across the Blue Nile, Lake Tana, or the Sobat which would arrest the flow of their waters into the Nile, except in agreement with the Governments of Great Britain and the Sudan.”

And again in the Tri-partite Agreement of 1906 between the United Kingdom, Italy, and France it is laid down that in the event of any disturbance of the *status quo* of Ethiopia the three Powers shall concert together to safeguard "The interests of Great Britain and Egypt in the Nile Basin, more especially as regards the regulation of the waters of that river and its tributaries."

Three official technical missions have, with the concurrence of the Abyssinian Government, visited the lake between 1902 and 1922 to report on the feasibility and cost of the work, and during the whole of this period negotiations have been more or less continuously in progress in the fruitless endeavour to secure Abyssinian consent to the scheme.

The proposal has been entirely misunderstood by those who did not, and could not be expected to, appreciate what was contemplated, and grossly misrepresented by those who ought to have known better.

In addition, certain quite genuine fears were engendered in the Abyssinian minds, which, though in fact groundless, can be quite well understood by those conversant with their mentality.

It was, for example, thought that the damming of the lake would increase enormously the level of its waters and would not only submerge shrines and churches on the islands and banks, but would also invade the shores and rob numbers of people of their land. One of the principal chiefs of the district asked the members of the last mission that visited the place whether they did not contemplate building a wall one hundred metres high! As a matter of fact, the range between high and low water level of the lake is only about one and a half metres, and, so far from any fantastic erection of the kind being contemplated, the proposal is to *lower* the outlet by excavation, and then, by the installation of a regulator, no increase of the flood level of the lake at all would be involved.

On the contrary, by this means the highest levels of the lake would be limited, thus safeguarding the inhabitants of

the shores from the disastrous effects of high floods ; while the lower and slightly increased range of levels would decrease the existing area of swamp, and thus render the neighbourhood more healthy—fever and mosquitoes at present render it very much the reverse for men and animals as well.

As for the absurd objection that the proposed works would result in depriving Abyssinia of water she needs for her own purposes, it is only necessary to point out that the water now flows away annually without benefiting anyone, whereas if the proposed dam were installed the same amount would flow away, but more regularly throughout the year, to the great advantage of everyone concerned.

The formation of a road across the province would be of very great value and assistance to Abyssinian trade, and the money spent in wages, in the purchase of supplies, and otherwise would benefit the inhabitants very appreciably.

The difficulties encountered have not arisen merely with the Abyssinian Government. Unfortunately Italy appears to have regarded Lake Tana as coming within her sphere of influence, and this fact did not help matters. This, indeed, would be a mild way of expressing the position when one considers the extent to which foreign rivalry and intrigue have gone in the past in the endeavour to thwart the attainment of anything tangible in Abyssinia by other foreign Powers interested there.

It was no doubt rather with the object of "calling off" Italian opposition than from any idea that Italian help could be useful that the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1925 was concluded—in other words, it was rather a case of "hands off" than of "hands on," to Italy. In this connection it may be recollected that a previous difficulty had arisen with Italy in regard to the utilisation of the waters of the Gash River for the irrigation of the Kassala cotton-fields in the Sudan, a difficulty which was settled by an Anglo-Italian exchange of notes in June 1925, and which attracted little or no public notice.

But be that as it may, the arrangement fell like a bomb-shell in Abyssinia, and no one unfamiliar with the country can imagine the effect it produced.

At first feelings of the most bitter hostility were aroused ; and, stimulated *inter alia* by less responsible organs of the French Press, the most absurd accusations were levelled against British diplomacy.

The Abyssinians, indignant at the conclusion of agreements concerning their country without their knowledge, and fearful of what this much misunderstood agreement might portend, entered a protest with the League of Nations, the tone of which showed that their suspicions had been excited to an alarming pitch by the linking up of the Tana demand with the more ambitious project of an Italian railway about 1,500 miles long, circling through the western part of Abyssinia in order to join the Italian possessions of the north-east and south-east of the country.

Official statements of a reassuring nature were, however, issued in London and Rome, in which the motives underlying the agreement were clearly explained, and the most definite assurances given as to the entire absence of any idea of coercion, and full recognition of the fact that the granting or refusal of the concessions indicated in the agreement was a matter entirely within the discretion of the Abyssinian Government.

Thanks to these assurances and explanations, and as a result of further and calmer consideration and a more complete understanding of the proposals, the early feelings of hostility and suspicion have largely died down, and the agreement at least served one useful purpose in that it has made the Abyssinians think of the question, with the result that the more reasonably minded already admit the justice of the British claim to a settlement of the matter, which is consequently reduced to a question of ways and means.

This does not, however, bring it within reasonable distance of solution, for very real difficulties still exist in the Abyssinian mind. They fear that should large works,

costing (to their ideas) immense sums of money, and directed by foreign engineers, be erected in their country, they might be opening the way to foreign invasion and the possible loss of their independence. Should, for example, a fanatical priest or a band of *shiftas* assassinate some of the foreigners, or cause damage to the works, then an excuse would be afforded for the entry of troops along the newly made motor-road.

Again, the priests raise the bogey of the possible inundation of some of the churches near the lake, in spite of the guarantees given in this connection that the proposed works would not raise the lake above the present winter high-water level.

I do not think that either priests or people near the lake object to the proposals at all now; they realise too clearly the benefits they would derive from them. But priests and politicians at headquarters (the bane of most countries) still stir up trouble on this point, stimulated no doubt by outside sources.

And so the unworkable idea of "internationalising" the work has been put forward as a sort of smoke-screen for masking unreasonable opposition. The idea is possibly attractive to theorists, but in practice it is of course out of the question. The British and Sudan Governments are the people who will have to find the money to do the work and pay the annual subvention which the Abyssinians will no doubt demand. They have given explicit guarantees as to the lake-level, and other important matters, and they cannot be responsible for giving effect to these guarantees if others do the work. They are the only people who know the irrigation requirements of the districts in whose interests the work is to be done and for whose interests they are responsible. How, then, is it even remotely conceivable that they can hand over their responsibilities—responsibilities towards the Abyssinians and towards their own people—to an international, and therefore irresponsible, body?

Moreover, as has been pointed out in the published technical reports, the work must be started in a tentative



#### ABYSSINIAN CHIEFS IN GALA DRESS

This very handsome and picturesque dress includes lions' mane head-dresses, velvet gold embroidered capes, gold- and silver-embroidered shields—and rifles.





manner, and it will not be possible to determine the exact and final nature of the best form of construction until experience has been obtained of the effect in the Sudan of the preliminary operations at Tana in relation with other vast irrigation works that have been constructed on the Blue and White Nile. In other words, ideas as to the scope and extent of the installation required will vary as the work proceeds, and only those who are responsible for the vast network of irrigation machinery—which must be regarded as a whole—will be in a position to decide what is necessary and what is the best way of doing it.

It is not an isolated proposition, but part of a scheme of works already constructed, under construction, and to be constructed, of which it forms a small though important section, and as part of which it must be constructed and controlled.

And, above all, it must be remembered that by the Treaty of 1902 it has been agreed between the Governments of Abyssinia and Britain that works of this nature on the Blue Nile shall only be constructed in agreement between them; that the Emperor Menelik stated at that time that he had “no intention of giving any concession with regard to the Blue Nile and Lake Tana except to H.M. Government and the Government of the Sudan or one of their subjects”; and that, consequently, handing over the responsibility therefor to a third party would be a breach of the arrangement made with Menelik which Britain could not contemplate and Abyssinia could not desire.

This and other indirect forms of objection and opposition will no doubt take time to overcome, but that the obviously just and equitable requirements of Britain, Egypt, and the Sudan in this matter must be met within a reasonable time can surely not admit of discussion. Egypt alone, quite apart from the Sudan, will in the course of time require an immense increase in her water-supply to meet the needs of her growing population, an increase estimated by a responsible authority at the enormous figure of 40,000 million

tons as an ultimate figure. It is clear, therefore, that the Sudan cannot draw to any increased extent on existing supplies, and that all possible means must be adopted to secure fresh sources.

Another of the questions referred to in the preceding chapter, namely that of slavery, is one which must, in the interests of the country itself, and also with regard to its position as a member of the League of Nations, be dealt with at no distant date.

The slavery and *gabar* system existing in Abyssinia have been fully described elsewhere in the present volume, and from this it may be gathered that little real practical headway has been made in the direction of fulfilling the conditions agreed to when Abyssinia was admitted to the League of Nations.

The efforts already made by the Regent must be made effective, and some serious effort must surely be made to grapple with the *gabar* system, which, as I have already said, is in my view a far worse evil than slavery as it exists to-day in Abyssinia. Failing such action, the practical sympathy which would be shown by the League for a fellow-member in the event of that member encountering difficulties with another country would be largely discounted.

Again, Italy has large schemes in contemplation in regard to Abyssinia if one may judge from the references in the Anglo-Italian Agreement to railway construction, economic spheres of interest, etc., and from the activity being displayed north and south of Abyssinia and in the Red Sea. These schemes of economic penetration would, if carried out within legitimate bounds, tend to develop enormously the resources and the trade, and consequently the wealth, of Abyssinia. And it will be difficult for Abyssinia to continue to oppose a blank veto to all and any legitimate proposals for such development.

To deal adequately with these and many other outstanding questions of importance in the interests of Abyssinia herself, she must admit the necessity for administrative reform.

It is impossible for her, with her present archaic system of government, to achieve tangible results either as regards internal or external affairs.

Failing the development of her resources, which must be primarily in the interests of Abyssinia herself, she cannot acquire the financial strength of which she is sorely in need to enable her to put her house in order. Financial reform is the first consideration; nothing in the way of internal reform can be achieved until it is possible to pay salaries to the Governors of provinces, instead of allowing them to bleed and enslave the population. Only with the aid of properly paid Governors can honesty of administration be ensured and the power of the great chiefs be curbed. With this reform accomplished, a definite budget and a fixed Civil List, the central Government would acquire the necessary authority and resources to enable it adequately to discharge its functions and faithfully to carry out its liabilities to its people and to the external world—to repress corruption and bribery, to reform its judicial methods; to establish some form of education, to establish communications.

A Regent—however capable and sincere and hard-working he may be—who is hampered and obstructed at every turn by powerful and hostile reactionary elements, and forced to deal with every detail personally, owing to lack of competent assistance, cannot be expected to cope with the modern requirements of the State whose destinies he is striving to direct. And when to these difficulties are added those caused by foreign international intrigue, the task becomes well-nigh hopeless.

If both internal and external troubles of a serious character are to be avoided in the future, it is clear that action on the lines of that taken in Siam is essential. Thirty years ago Siam was in much the same position as Abyssinia is to-day. But by its utilisation of able and upright foreign advisers, Siam, while retaining her full measure of independence, has been brought into the very front rank of well-administered

States, possessing remarkably sound international credit, an efficient and honest administration, extensive systems of education, justice, and communications, and an appreciable volume of foreign trade.

There is no reason why Abyssinia should not do likewise ; but to enable this result to be attained it is essential that there should be a cessation of the foreign intrigue which in the past has done so much to wreck any effort at progress and to stifle legitimate commercial development.

Given that desirable consummation ; given that the Regent be enabled to acquire the necessary authority and power to enforce his will at home ; given that he be assisted by the right type of European and American advisers in the different branches of administrations ; given, I say, these desiderata, and the future of Ethiopia may be as bright as her past history is fascinating.

But progress must in any event be slow, and patience must be exercised by those who have dealings with this strange country ; they must indeed constantly bear in mind those words of Bacon, too often forgotten in an age of hustle :

“ It were good that men in their innovations would follow the example of Time itself, which, indeed, innovateth greatly, but quietly and by degrees scarce to be perceived.”

## CHAPTER XXVI

### LOOKING BACK

FROM Solomon to the League of Nations is a far cry, but the story of Abyssinia has come down to us in legend and tradition covering all this period, and it extends indeed yet further into the mists of antiquity. The old Ethiopian chronicles can hardly be regarded as history, but they embody folklore and legend which, transmitted through the centuries, garbled and exaggerated by the passage of time though they are, yet contain enough of information to enable an idea—imperfect though it may be—to be gained as to some of the remote past of this strange country.

Many of the chronicles have been rendered from the original Gîz into Latin, French, Portuguese, Italian, and German, and some few into English; others in the form of old sheepskin manuscripts still await the labours of the translator in the churches of Abyssinia and the museums of Europe. More, unfortunately, were destroyed during the Muslim and Galla invasions of the early sixteenth century. But sufficient is available to enable a deal of information to be gleaned, which, checked and amplified by other records, contemporary and otherwise, reveals a story fascinating and almost unique in character.

The Regent of Abyssinia, keenly interested in the story of his country, as indeed are the majority of his less illiterate subjects, caused to be prepared for me from these chronicles a list of the sovereigns of Abyssinia from the most remote times up to date, and this list, now published for the first time, is full of interest.

It is no mere figure of speech to say that this record goes back to "the most remote times," for it purports to give

the names, dates, and lengths of reigns of Abyssinian monarchs back to 4530 B.C., or the 970th year of the creation of the world according to the Abyssinian calendar !

By the kindness of Mr. Philip Zaphiro, C.M.G., Oriental Secretary to the British Legation in Abyssinia, I was enabled to obtain a complete translation of this voluminous list, which covers a period of 6,310 years, and includes the names of 312 sovereigns.

It is unnecessary to say that this list could not by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as an historical document, but it is none the less a valuable contribution to the legendary wealth of the country and a useful indication of the past.

The story of Abyssinia as revealed by this list falls broadly into five parts. We have, first of all, the more purely legendary portion, covering a period of some 3,500 years up to the advent of the Queen of Sheba and the ascent to the throne of her son by King Solomon.

During this period three dynasties are supposed to have held power, those of Ori or Aram (one of the thirty-five sons of Adam), of Ham, and of Joctan. After the first of these three dynasties there is a gap of 530 years between the Deluge (3244) and the destruction of the Tower of Babel (2713). Why this gap should occur, whether the world was supposed to have been kingless, or how this deluge could have affected the 8,000-foot plateau of Abyssinia, are points not divulged by the chronicler.

It is, however, curious that in some other legendary accounts of the mythological period of Abyssinia it is related that the advent of King Solomon's son was preceded by "three reigns of the serpent Arwe or Aroue," which is not very dissimilar to Ori, the name of the founder of the first dynasty in this list. And in some old paintings of which I have obtained copies made by Abyssinian artists there are graphic reproductions of the evils of the rule of the "serpent" (portrayed as a fearsome dragon). There are also vivid descriptions of the termination by poison of the



WAYZARO MENEN



TAFARI MAKONNEN

THEIR IMPERIAL HIGHNESSES





existence of the dragon, and the elevation to the throne of one Agabos, the poisoner. It is further significant that the said Agabos made it a condition of poisoning the dragon that his daughter should succeed him on the throne, and the artist portrays the death of Agabos and the coronation of his daughter as the Queen of Sheba.

Now the list of kings with which we are dealing gives as the founder of one of the dynasties succeeding that of Ori the name of Agbounas, and as the last of that dynasty the Queen of Sheba. Allowing for obvious inaccuracies in nomenclature and the efflux of time, the coincidence between the alleged happenings in the list of kings, the verbal legends, and the old pictures is at least curious.

The second part of the story covers a period of nearly 1,300 years, from the accession of Solomon's son in 982 B.C. and the introduction of Judaism to the advent of Christianity in Abyssinia early in the fourth century. This period is also of course largely legendary, although after the birth of Christ contemporary records from other sources throw some light on happenings within or concerning Abyssinia.

The third part covers only a little over 600 years, during which time the rulers of Abyssinia were Christians and were known as the Axumite dynasty. This period comes to a close with an internal revolution caused by the Jewish rulers of part of the country who had not become converted to Christianity.

Following this revolution an usurping dynasty held the reins of power for some three hundred years, which may be described as the fourth part of the story; after which the ancient dynasty was restored, and, according to the chronicles, remained in power until to-day.

This, the fifth part, which dates from about A.D. 1260, is really the only portion which may be regarded as to some extent historical.

It is hardly necessary to say that the dates given in the early portions of this list do not in any way agree with those given in the Chronicle of Axum, which is regarded with the greatest veneration in Abyssinia, and which, though it

gives the creation of the world as 5500 B.C., alleges that Abyssinia had never been inhabited until 1800 B.C. In 1600 B.C. it is supposed to have been laid waste by a flood (probably a reference to Isaiah, Chapter xviii—a land “beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,” a land “the rivers have spoiled”), and in 1400 B.C. it is supposed to have been settled in by a variety of people speaking different languages.

But it is difficult to determine which of the two sections of the list we are considering may be regarded as the more fascinating story, the old legendary period of semi-fiction or the more modern epoch of sober fact. Both are full of romance, of strife, of seemingly impossible happenings, of heroic figures, of reverses of fortune, of glory and disaster.

The story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba has been told too often to need repetition here, but the tale of the departure of their son, the young Menelik, from Jerusalem bearing the Ark of the Covenant with him, his passage across the Red Sea, his deliverance from the pursuing hosts of Solomon by the miraculous closing of a passage through the mountains, his arrival at Axum with a wonderful train of Jewish priests and followers, and his magnificent reception there by his mother, would by itself provide material for a book—indeed it has done so.

When we reach what may be described as the semi-historical period of the early centuries of the Christian era, there are other features of no less absorbing interest. The conversion to Christianity of a whole country by a couple of shipwrecked youths, the appeal for help to the “Christian princes of Abyssinia” by a Roman Emperor, the campaigns on the Arabian side of the Red Sea, when under the walls of Mecca, while Mahomet was in his cradle, the Abyssinian forces were defeated and the history of the world changed by clearing the way for the prophet of Islam—are a few among some events which must appeal forcibly to the imagination.

Then the Jewish revolution hurled the dynasty of Solomon's son from the throne; according to the ancient custom decreed by the Queen of Sheba, all the members of the Royal

House were at that time incarcerated on an isolated *amba* or mountain-top, and all were massacred save only a child who, borne on the saddle before a loyal noble, was carried far off to the south, and there founded the Kingdom of Shoa, where for three hundred years his descendants reigned, until fortune re-established them as "Kings of Kings" of all Ethiopia.

During this interval one of the usurping line caused to be built those wonderful monolithic churches hewn out of the solid rock which stand to-day and have been graphically described by the few travellers who have visited them. Fact shows us the churches; legend relates that King Lalibela, the builder, could only achieve his task by divine assistance, and that angels laboured by night to assist the efforts of the workmen who toiled all day. So that when the workmen resumed their task in the morning they found that for every foot they had completed in the previous day their celestial co-operators had added three feet in the night.

This ancient engineer had other great ideas; he conceived the plan of diverting the course of the Blue Nile, so that, instead of flowing westwards to Egypt, it should flow eastwards to the Red Sea. Traces of works alleged to have been commenced by him are shown even now, but the task was too much for him to complete; presumably the celestial assistance granted for the church building was not extended to so mundane an object as irrigation.

That the so-called Solomonean dynasty was restored during the thirteenth century is an undoubted fact, but here again legend weaves delightful tales around the circumstances of this happening. The restoration is alleged to have been due to the efforts of a monk, Takla Haymanot by name, who has since become a national saint, and around whose name a vast store of legend and tradition has collected.

The conditions under which the ruling family made way for the legitimate house are supposed to have provided that the former should retain certain lands and privileges in perpetuity, that one-third of the land of the country should be held by the Church, and that the Abuna or head of

the Church should never be an Abyssinian, but should be nominated by the Coptic patriarch in Alexandria.

These conditions hold good to-day, and the powerful position thus created for the Church by the wily monk is undoubtedly one of the main causes of the non-development of the country and of the maintenance of its mediæval institutions.

There is, however, quite a different tradition prevalent in the North of Abyssinia as to the origin of this dynasty of Zagwe and the repartition of the kingdom between them and the so-called Solomonean house. According to this tradition, when Menelik, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, arrived in Abyssinia he was accompanied by his sister Salomea and her son Sirak, and to this latter Solomon assigned one-third of the Ethiopian kingdom, naming him Waag Shum or chief of Waag. From him sprang the so-called Zagwe dynasty, which in the tenth century acquired the whole of the kingdom owing to the failure of male issue from Menelik's side of the family. After three hundred years the then representative of the Zagwes resigned the major part of the kingdom to Menelik's descendant (presumably in the female line), retaining for himself his original domains of Waag and Lasta.

Certain it is that the ruler of Waag and Lasta is in quite a different position to the other provincial governors. When Dr. Beke passed through the country the Waag Shum was not regarded as a dependant chief obliged to pay tribute, and to call him Dajazmach would have been an insult. Wylde, who spent some time in that part of the country, relates that the then Waag Shum showed him his "family tree," extending back over three hundred years, and told him that the three-storied building in which they were sitting (a rare feature) was erected over two hundred and fifty years previously by one of his ancestors.

On the other hand, I have seen it stated that the original Lasta family "ruled until 1768," though whether this statement was meant to imply that they did not rule after that date is not clear.

I have also come across an old Abyssinian verse indicating the equality of the Emperor and the Waag Shum ; it runs as follows :

*Waagshum la wanbar ;  
Negus la manbar,*

which is :

The Waag Shum for the wanbar ;  
The Negus for the manbar.

—the point of the rhyme being that both *wanbar* and *manbar* mean either chair or throne.

The newly restored dynasty succeeded to no bed of roses ; they were very shortly involved in a long series of wars with their Muslim neighbours, and for centuries held their position with difficulty as an outpost of Christianity—"an island of Christians amid a sea of pagans," as the Emperor Menelik later described his country.

Abyssinia was very nearly submerged by the invading hordes of Somals, Arabians, and Turks in the early sixteenth century ; the then King, Lebna Dengel, was indeed defeated in battle after battle, hunted like a wild beast from one remote corner of his country to another ; the wonderfully decorated churches were sacked and burned ; immense accumulations of gold and treasures were carried off ; and the few Abyssinians who remained in arms were in such perpetual danger of their lives that it is recorded they were afraid even to light fires to cook their food, and so acquired the habit of eating raw meat—a habit which to-day is a universal custom of the country.

Abyssinia was, however, to be saved from the invaders, and the history of that part of the world entirely changed, by the efforts of a handful of the remarkable race which in the sixteenth century carved its way into so much of the unknown world. A Portuguese had, after three years' wandering, penetrated into Abyssinia before the Islamic invasion—the Empire of Prester John as he imagined ; and, fired by his description of a great and wealthy African Christian potentate, the King of Portugal had despatched

a mission to negotiate a treaty with "the Prester." After six years of travel, incredible adventures, and much hardship and suffering, this mission struggled back to Portugal, and, though failing in its primary object, the ultimate result, twenty years later, was the despatch of a force of 450 musketeers under Dom Christoforo da Gama—younger brother of the famous navigator—to the assistance of the sorely pressed Abyssinian monarch.

Christoforo da Gama was killed in battle, but the survivors of his party enabled the Abyssinians to inflict a decisive defeat on their Muslim foes and to re-establish and maintain the independence of their empire.

Their misfortunes were, however, by no means at an end; the Muslims had no sooner been driven out than the Galla tribes from the south burst into the country and, spreading over it like swarms of locusts, occupied many of the most fertile provinces, and, though failing to obtain domination over the country, they maintained a more or less continual though intermittent warfare with the Abyssinians for centuries. They were not finally entirely conquered and subdued until the advent of Menelik at the end of the nineteenth century, and even to-day they form the majority of the population.

Scarcely had the first onrush of these fresh foes been stemmed when the Abyssinians had to contend with internal difficulties caused by their erstwhile allies the Portuguese.

Most of the survivors of Da Gama's expedition had settled down in the country and had received grants of land and gold, married Abyssinian wives and founded families. Jesuit missionaries had arrived, and, helped by the Portuguese colony, were making strenuous efforts to convert the country to Roman Catholicism and overthrow the old national Church—efforts the extent and failure of which are fully described in the chapters dealing with the story of the Abyssinian Church.

But so intense was the feeling of antagonism aroused by the intrigues and activities of the missionaries, that the Abyssinian Emperor actually concluded an arrangement

with the Muslims who occupied the coast by which Portuguese were in future to be prevented from passing through to Abyssinia. So thoroughly had the activities of the priests obliterated the feelings of gratitude aroused by the efforts of the soldiers, that Christian and Muslim foes were now allied against Christian friends.

Civil war again distracted the unhappy realm, and it was during this period, principally in the seventeenth century, that a few intrepid European explorers began to penetrate again into the country. Of these the most remarkable was James Bruce, whose work will always remain the most remarkable ever written on Abyssinia, both as a record of personal adventure and as a contribution to an understanding and knowledge of the country and its people.

It was not until that extraordinary character Theodore seized the throne that any attempt was made to unify the warring elements which composed the so-called empire. But then the Galla received their first real chastisement, rival kings were brought into subjection, and it seemed that an African Napoleon had arisen whose talents as a soldier and as an administrator might well create a formidable empire.

Unfortunately drink and debauch unhinged his mind, and he became little better than a megalomaniacal lunatic, oppressing and slaughtering his subjects and alienating his friends and supporters. When he challenged the power of England by imprisoning and ill-treating British envoys, officials, and missionaries, his end was near ; and, although the difficulties which had arisen were to some extent due to official bungling, the Napier expedition brought Theodore's misrule and his life to an end.

A Tigrean prince, Kassa, succeeded Theodore as King John IV, and when he was killed in battle fighting against the Der-vishes, King Menelik of Shoa, a descendant of the Solomonean line, was able to proclaim himself as King of Kings of Ethiopia, thanks to years of patient military and political preparation, and intriguing with France and Italy, whereby he had acquired a goodly store of arms and ammunition.



Menelik was inspired by vast dreams of territorial expansion, and he set about his work skilfully and methodically. Thanks to the policy of "scuttle" adopted by Great Britain, he had been able to possess himself of the large and fertile province of Harar ; he conquered and brought into subjection the great Galla districts east, south, and west ; and, more than all, defeated in pitched battle the forces of a great European Power, when out of 14,000 men no less than 10,000 were killed, wounded, or captured.

He was undoubtedly cognisant of, and probably a party to, Marchand's dash to Fashoda, and sent out a large force to join hands with him, pushing out at the same time other forces to occupy other districts south and west. From the Nile to the Red Sea, from Khartoum to Lake Nyanza, was his ideal of the extent of his Empire, but Kitchener's reconquest of the Sudan shattered this dream, which shared the fate of the French schemes for a line of territory east to west across Africa, and the Italian projects for another line from the Mediterranean to the southern extremity of the Red Sea.

Nevertheless, Menelik achieved much, and would have achieved more had he not been stricken by paralysis in 1908. He lingered on until 1913, but took no part in government affairs, which were dealt with by his masterful wife Taitu for some time, and then by a Council of Rases, until his grandson, Lej Yasu, a boy of 16, took the power into his hands.

This was a disastrous period for Abyssinia, for Lej Yasu established a monument of misrule which might have led to the gravest consequences, indeed to the break-up of the Empire. But, fortunately for the country, he united everyone against him by coquetting with Islam, thus offending their most cherished institution, the Church.

The Abuna excommunicated him, absolved the great nobles from their oath of allegiance, and so facilitated his deposition in 1916, when the present Empress Zauditu, Menelik's daughter, and Ras Tafari, his cousin, were proclaimed respectively Empress and Regent, and the way was paved for the happenings which are described in the preceding chapters.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE STORY OF THE ABYSSINIAN CHURCH

It will be readily appreciated from what has been written in the preceding chapters that the Abyssinians take an immense interest in their Church and in religious and theological questions; on this account they have fought bitter foreign and civil wars, and there is nothing indeed which delights them more than to embark on theological discussions on the most trifling points of doctrine.

They have, moreover, always coupled with this a great interest in and sympathy for other Churches, and there were few incidents in Ras Tafari's visit to England that gave him more pleasure than his meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Westminster Abbey contains an interesting example of this feeling. When H.M. King Edward fell ill and his coronation had to be postponed, Ras Makonnen, the father of Ras Tafari, who had been deputed to represent Abyssinia as special envoy at the Coronation ceremonies, presented a very fine Abyssinian Church cross to Westminster Abbey as a votive offering for the King's recovery.

This sympathetic gesture was matched by a graceful and tactful act on the part of the late Dean of Westminster, for on the day when the postponed Coronation ceremony took place the cross was borne at the head of the procession of clergy into the Abbey, and was later installed permanently on the south side of the High Altar, a romantic episode much appreciated by the Abyssinians and one in keeping with the rest of their religious tradition.

For, like most other matters concerning Abyssinia, the story of its Church is a romantic one, albeit extremely

difficult to trace consecutively with any accuracy from the scanty records which still remain. Although it is a branch of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, it was at times cut off from all communication with its parent institution for long periods owing to wars and disturbances, so that Alexandrian records show large gaps in regard to Abyssinian affairs. And the Abyssinian records themselves suffered irreparable losses at the time of the Muslim invasion of the early sixteenth century, when priceless manuscripts were burned amid the general pillage and sacking of churches and monasteries throughout the country.

We know the beginning and end of the story fairly well, but it is the intermediate stages—from some points of view the most interesting—that it is so difficult to re-establish, even with the aid of such authorities as the old Ethiopic chronicles, and writers such as Rufinus, Ludolph, Bruce, Basset, Fowler, Dowling, and others whose researches have all been laid under contribution.

As regards the beginning, we may, I think, accept the version of the historian Rufinus from among the mass of contradictory and legendary material that has piled up around this remarkable episode, inasmuch as Rufinus received his information from one of the two principals concerned, and it is, moreover, supported in its essentials from other sources.

In the year A.D. 330 one Meropius, a Greek Christian merchant of Tyre, set out on a voyage of exploration to try to reach what he called India, India being then a loose term employed to describe any Eastern country of dark-skinned people. He took with him two young relations, probably his sons, the elder of whom was named Frumentius, and the younger Aedesius.

On his way home the vessel called at an Abyssinian port to water, probably Adulis, and the natives of the country, who had recently broken off some sort of alliance they had had with Rome, and who were suffering from the ill-deeds of a Roman vessel that had recently called there,

attacked the vessel as she lay at anchor, and murdered Meropius and the entire crew. The two younger relatives of the unfortunate merchant had gone ashore, and were reading or sleeping under some trees, when they were seized by the natives, made prisoners, and sold as slaves to the King of Axum.

This potentate was impressed by the appearance and bearing of the youths, and raised them rapidly in his service, until in a short time Frumentius became his treasurer and secretary and Aedesius his cup-bearer. To such an extent had they gained the King's confidence, doubtless in part owing to the comparatively liberal education they possessed, that at his death, which occurred shortly afterwards, the Queen, his widow, who had been made Regent, invited them to remain in the country (though the King had given them their freedom) in order to help her in managing her affairs, and especially in educating her son.

During this period they seem to have increased their influence in the country materially, to have advanced some way in the promotion of Christianity, and even to have built a number of churches.

When the young King came of age they left the country, Aedesius becoming a dignitary of the Church in Tyre, where he met Rufinus and told him the foregoing story.

Frumentius, however, went to Alexandria, where he laid the whole position before Bishop Athanasius, and urged the sending of a Bishop to Abyssinia, to extend and develop the efforts at christianisation so auspiciously commenced.

Athanasius consecrated Frumentius and despatched him to Abyssinia, where he took up his residence at Axum, and so commenced the long line of Abyssinian Metropolitans or Abunas which, through many vicissitudes and with some few intermissions, has continued right up till to-day.

Frumentius was well received by the young King, whom he had educated, and by the people; he was given the name of Abba Salama (the Father of Peace), by which he is known in the old Ethiopian chronicles, which thus naïvely describe

this very remarkable event : " At this time Christianity appeared ; there were then no Turks. . . . Part of the people professed the Jewish religion, others worshipped the Serpent. Abba Salama taught them the religion of our Saviour Jesus Christ (may he be praised) and made miracles before them. They believed, and received Christian baptism. Their conversion took place in the year 333 of the birth of Christ."

During the Abunaship of Abba Salama, Athanasius had been expelled from Alexandria and replaced by Arian Partriarchs ; and Constantius, who had succeeded Constantine as Emperor sent an Embassy bearing a letter to " My most dear brethren . . . Abra and Azba, Princes of Ethiopia " urging them to persuade Salama to relinquish the doctrines of Athanasius or to depose Salama and replace him by another Bishop who should be in sympathy with George, the Arian Patriarch of Alexandria. This letter seems to have produced no effect, but for the next hundred years practically nothing is known of the progress of Christianity in Abyssinia, though we have a list of names of individuals recorded as having been Abunas ; how or by whom they were appointed is not clear.

In A.D. 451, however, there occurred the great schism due to the pronouncement as to the dual nature of Christ made by the Council of Chalcedon. The Abyssinians have always accepted the decisions of the three first Œcumenical Councils of Nicæa, Constantinople, and Ephesus, but, in common with the Armenians, Copts, and Syrian Jacobites, they refused to recognise the ruling of the Council of Chalcedon ; and when Dioscurus was condemned and deposed for declaring that " the two natures in our Blessed Lord were so blended that there was one humano-divine nature," the Ethiopians followed him and adopted his doctrine, remaining " monophysites " ever after. But they have had terrific controversies, leading to persecution and civil war, among themselves on this point of the single or dual nature, and the two schools of monks in the country, those of Debra

Libanos and those of Saint Eustathius have during all time quarrelled bitterly upon the point of theology in connection therewith.

It was not, however, until between A.D. 460 and 480, during the reign of King Ela Ameda, that monks began to arrive and monachism was introduced into the country. There is some doubt as to whence they came and what gave rise to their advent ; the old Ethiopian chronicles say they came from Rome, but this is probably an error due to the fact that they came from the Roman Empire, possibly from the Eastern Empire, Constantinople, or from Egypt, more probably from Syria. Nine of them appear to have been outstanding figures in the development of Christianity in Abyssinia during the fifth century, and their advent is a red-letter date in the Ethiopic calendar. Each of them founded a monastery in the province he evangelised, and, as many of these monasteries exist to-day and are famous in Abyssinian history, it may be of interest to enumerate them.

The principal was Abba Aragawi (or Michael), who established the great monastery of Debra Damo in Tigre, where the Abyssinian princes were interned for several centuries. The others were as follow :

Abbe Asfi, the monastery of Yaha, north-east of Adowa ; Abba Garima (or Isaac), the convent of Madara ; Abba Pantaleon, Axum ; Abba Liquanos, the convent of Debra Quanasel near Axum ; Abba Gouga (or Gouba), near Madara ; Abba Yemata, the monastery of Gar Alta ; Abba Alef, the monastery of Behza ; and Abba Sehma, the monastery of Sedenya.

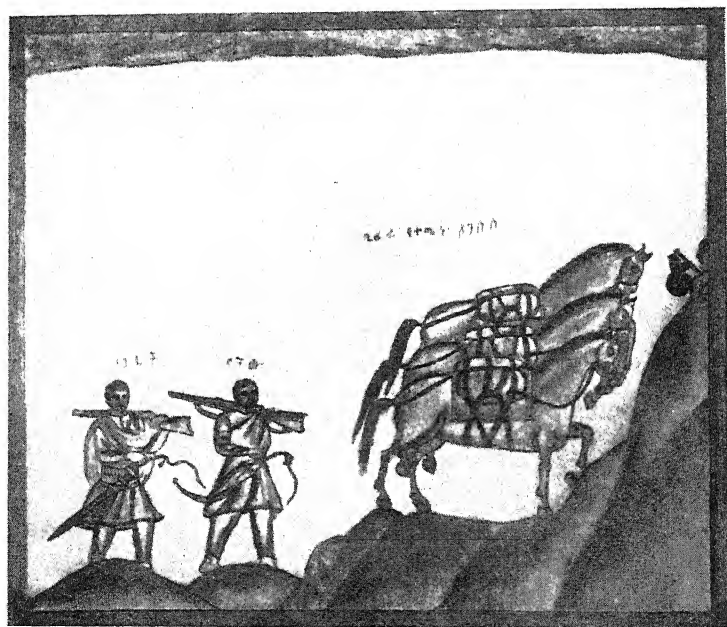
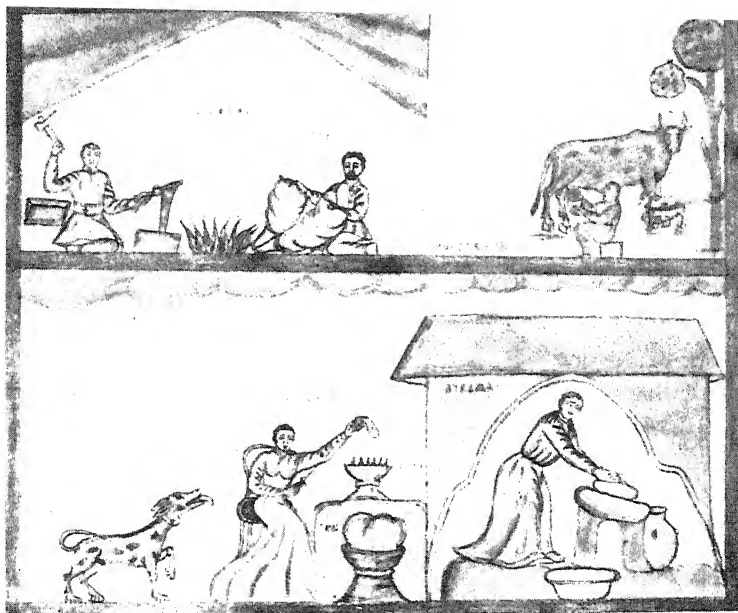
The arrival of these monks was followed in the fifth and sixth centuries by what has been described as the " golden age of Abyssinian ecclesiastical history " ; there was immense literary activity in the way of translating ecclesiastical works into Gîz, and it is most unfortunate that, owing to Muslim devastation, only the record of the works and none of the actual works themselves have survived so far as is

known, though there may be some manuscripts hidden away in the old monasteries: the monks of to-day are, however, very chary of displaying any of these old treasures to a European traveller.

Meanwhile, the Abyssinians had carried Christianity and their rule across the Red Sea into Yemen, and they had established a Christian King of the Homerites in that country. These people had now been attacked, tortured, and murdered by the other inhabitants of the district under a Jew, Dunaan by name, who had taken possession of the country, and in 530 the Emperor Justinian sent an envoy to Abyssinia to beg for help for the persecuted Christians and against the Persians. The Abyssinian King Kaleb (or Elesbaan) is reported to have crossed the Red Sea with an army of 120,000 men in 423 ships (the details of this transport feat are not given); he certainly reconquered that part of the country, and re-established Christianity, which endured for some seventy years, after which the Abyssinians were driven out of the Yemen and Christianity disappeared.

From now onwards there are records of missions coming from Abyssinia to Egypt from time to time, asking for the appointment of successive Abunas, and thus showing the maintenance of the connection with and the dependence on the Alexandrian patriarchate. But between the eighth and the tenth centuries the spread of Islam and the prevalence of wars and disturbances broke off the connection between Egypt and Abyssinia, and the powers of the Abuna seem to have been exercised by the reigning kings, who regarded themselves as supreme in ecclesiastical matters, and even went so far as themselves to celebrate communion.

In 921, however, the Abyssinian King sent a request to Alexandria for a new prelate, who should not only act as Abuna, but who was also to educate the King's two sons, and who on the King's death was charged with the choice of deciding which of the two would, on coming of age, be the most suitable to succeed to the throne.



#### TYPICAL SPECIMENS OF ABYSSINIAN PAINTING

The upper one represents (a) smiths at work with hammer, anvil, and bellows (b) milking (c) a meal (d) grinding flour. The lower one is a caravan of "nagadis" (merchants) on the march.





It is hardly necessary to say that this led to civil war and the expulsion of the Abuna.

Then came in 960 *circa* the Abyssinian revolution, the origin and details of which are shrouded in so much mystery. It is, however, obvious that the rule of the Jewish Queen who seized the reins of power about this time could not have been a long one, and that the usurping Zagwe dynasty which followed her at once and ruled for three hundred years must have been Christian. For in 955 there is a record of a fresh application for an Abuna from Alexandria, with the especial request that he should be a man of strength and piety as his predecessors had been men of small merit.

Although communications with Egypt were now and again cut off for long periods at a time, the succession of Abunas seems to have been maintained, and we have records of some interesting happenings.

One of the Abunas, Severus by name, an Egyptian monk, had gained his appointment from the Egyptian authorities by promising to erect mosques in Abyssinia—an amazing proceeding for a Christian Bishop! He actually carried out his undertaking, but the buildings were immediately destroyed by infuriated mobs of people, who even at that early date seem to have manifested that attachment for their own form of religion which later on was to carry them successfully through their long series of wars and disputes with Islam and with Rome.

The most interesting event during this period (in A.D. 1140) was, however, an application for the appointment of more bishops, a point of far-reaching importance, inasmuch as it affected the whole question of the relation of the Abyssinian Church to the Church of Alexandria.

To understand this it is necessary to go back to the Arabic canons of Nicæa, by which it was prohibited that an Abyssinian should hold the office of Abuna or head of the Abyssinian Church, which was therefore unable to choose its own chief, and had always to apply to Alexandria for a new appointment, and even for the appointment of bishops.

In order to ensure this, the Abuna is forbidden to have more than seven bishops, and, as twelve are necessary to consecrate a patriarch, the Abyssinian Church is thus powerless to obtain an Abuna without going to Alexandria.

The Patriarch of Alexandria obviously feared that if he granted the request of the Abyssinian King for more bishops, the result would be the appointment of an Abyssinian as Abuna, and the independence of the Abyssinian Church from that of Alexandria; he consequently refused to give his assent to the proposal, lest the claim of Alexandria to jurisdiction throughout North Africa should be impaired.

There is a strange inconsistency between this event and the next episode of importance in Abyssinian Church history. As has been related in the chapter dealing with the general history of the country, the rule of the Zagwe dynasty came to an end in A.D. 1260 owing to the intervention of the great national saint Takla Haymanot, who laid it down as one of the conditions of the reinstatement of the Solomonean dynasty, after their three hundred years of "wandering in the wilderness" of Shoa, that the Abuna should in future never be an Abyssinian, but should be appointed from Alexandria to keep up their connection with the outside world, maintain the standard of the Church, and avoid internal rivalry for the post.

Now if it had already been an established rule or practice that the Abuna must always be nominated from Alexandria, why should it have been necessary for Takla Haymanot to impose this condition at this date? And how comes it that Takla Haymanot, who was an Abyssinian, should himself have been Abuna, as he undoubtedly was? And another curious point in this connection is that this alleged stipulation is not mentioned in the Ethiopian biographies of Takla Haymanot, published by Dillman in the *Synaxar*, or by Conti-Rossini or Almeida.

Among the Abyssinians another reason was current for the adherence by them to the practice of obtaining their Abuna from Alexandria, namely that they had maintained

the custom merely in gratitude for the fact that they received their first Abuna, Abba Salama, in this way. This, however, is extremely unlikely.

A more plausible explanation is that the rival dynasties in the north and in Shoa had each had their Abuna, and that, while the former had come from Alexandria, the latter (of which Takla Haymanot was one) had been appointed locally; it would, therefore, have been with the object of putting an end to competition of this nature and re-affirming a practice which, at all events in Shoa, had fallen into desuetude that Takla Haymanot laid down this condition, if he did so at all.

This is a conceivable explanation, for there is no doubt that at about this time (the latter half of the thirteenth century) changes took place in the Church, which was put on a much stronger basis, and then acquired those immense territorial privileges which make its position so strong to-day.

But be the explanation what it may, the fact remains that in later times the Abyssinians have again endeavoured to obtain additional bishops from other sources. The late Emperor Johannes (1868-89) petitioned the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople to send Armenian Bishops, and three were sent. But national opinion was strongly opposed to this innovation, and two of them had to leave Abyssinia, one having died there. Haroutioun, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem in 1909, was also petitioned with the same object, but he very wisely refrained from interfering.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE STORY OF THE ABYSSINIAN CHURCH (*continued*)

To revert, however, to the period immediately following that of Takla Haymanot, there was then and in the next century a great stimulus to ecclesiastical activity. Possibly on account of the newly acquired Church wealth and power, possibly on account of the revival of theological study in Egypt at about this time and in the next century, there was a great deal of translation into Gîz of the Scriptures, especially of the New Testament, and a good deal of sacred literature was produced. The Christian religion was also energetically extended in those parts of the country which were still pagan ; and about this time there appeared on the scene Saint Eustathius, the founder of the northern order of monks, who maintained incessant theological discussions with the monks of Debra Libanos, and may be regarded as the Abyssinian " Low Church " party.

The monks of Debra Libanos had fallen upon evil days, for shortly after the advent of King Amda Sion in 1312 a member of their order had ventured to protest publicly against the King's licentious life, who retaliated by having him publicly flogged. Whether by accident or as an act of vengeance, the King's capital, Tegulet, in Shoa, was burned down, and the Sovereign, supposing this to be an act of vengeance on the part of the monks, banished the Ichegue to the rock fortress of Amba Geshen, and scattered the rest of the monks of Debra Libanos throughout the country. This event is known in Abyssinian ecclesiastical history as " The persecution of Debra Libanos."

The King appears, however, to have reverted to more orthodox ways later on, and during his reign was composed

the great national work, the *Kebra Nagast*, or glory of the kings, an extraordinarily interesting production, but of much too great a length to describe here ; suffice it to say that the first part, the more purely ecclesiastical, consists mainly of a description, purported to be given to the 318 Fathers of the Council of Nice, of the story of the creation of the world and of the biblical story up to the time of David.

During the reigns of this prince's immediate successors we read of the establishment of large numbers of new churches and of a war against Egypt on account of the imprisonment by the Egyptians of the Patriarch of Alexandria, thus demonstrating once again the close tie existing between the two Churches. But one curious—and like so many other things Abyssinian—self-contradictory event was that King Theodore I (1409–12) annulled the arrangement made by Takla Haymanot securing to the Church one-third of the lands of the empire, and yet, in spite of this, was canonised as a saint by the Church !

To King Zara Jacob (1434–68) belongs the credit of having—first of all Abyssinian monarchs—entered into relations with Europe, for he sent envoys to the Council of Florence to take part in the discussion of the question of the reunion of the Greek and Latin Churches, a combination suggested by the growing power of the Turks and Islam generally. It was largely due to the pig-headedness of some of the Eastern bishops and priests, including the Abyssinians, that the project failed.

This King extended the Church's influence very considerably in his own country, encouraging the production of an immense amount of sacred literature in G'iz, and is supposed to have himself composed a number of theological works. He unfortunately accompanied this valuable work by the most barbarous persecution of the non-Christian people of his empire.

It was at the beginning of the next century that a series of disasters befell Church and State which almost terminated their existence.

The Muslim invasion, which is described elsewhere in the present volume, was bad enough, for the pillage of churches, the massacre of priests and monks, and the scattering of the remnants of the population in hiding among the mountains, brought religious observance to a low ebb. But it had the effect of uniting the religious feeling of the people solidly against the beliefs of the marauder, and crystallising their views in one direction—that of their old faith.

The attack which followed, however, was worse because it divided the people among themselves, the King and a few prominent nobles taking part against the vast bulk of the nation.

The Portuguese military expedition which enabled the Abyssinians to defeat their Muslim enemies was followed by a persistent Jesuit propaganda for the conversion of Abyssinia to Rome, which almost succeeded, indeed it did succeed to a limited extent and for a very short while.

King David of Abyssinia (1508-40) had written to the Pope asking for a Nuncio to be sent, and this request, which was probably intended merely as the expression of a desire to be in touch with other religious authorities in the world, was misconstrued into an offer or a desire to substitute the Roman Catholic for the Alexandrian faith.

This idea was strengthened when the Portuguese Bermudez arrived in Rome from Abyssinia claiming that he had been consecrated as Abuna by the dying holder of that office, and that the Abyssinian King was prepared to make his submission to Rome. Bermudez has since been proved to be a thoroughly mendacious and unreliable witness, and it is therefore unnecessary to follow his efforts to get himself confirmed in the Abunaship, and his claim that the Pope had so confirmed him.

But the desire to convert Abyssinia had been aroused in Rome, and Ignatius Loyola petitioned to be sent there for that purpose. His request was not granted, but one Barreto was appointed as Patriarch, though in fact he never entered Abyssinia.

A coadjutor of his, Oviedo, proceeded there, and, although well received by the King, was not recognised as Patriarch.

Oviedo seems to have been about as unsuitable a choice as could well have been made. For when, after years of effort, he realised that he had made no progress, he quarrelled bitterly with the Abyssinians and excommunicated members of the Church, after which he wrote asking that 1,500 soldiers should be sent to assist in the work of conversion—"nothing but a good body of Portuguese soldiers would ever be able to reduce Ethiopia to the doctrines of the Roman Church."

Pope Pius V, who must have been possessed of common-sense and a sense of humour, decided, on receipt of this preposterous demand in 1567, to recall Oviedo and his subordinates, and "to send them somewhere else where they might do more good and make less noise."

Thus ended the first Jesuit effort to convert the Ethiopians, but it laid the seeds of years of struggle and suffering and civil war.

Over twenty years afterwards a converted Brahmin, De Sylva by name, was sent to resume the interrupted missionary labours in the Abyssinian field, but it was not until 1604 that there arrived the most remarkable of all the Jesuit envoys of the country, Peter Paez, whose achievements in various fields have been recounted in a previous chapter.

Paez was a Spaniard, and, disguised as a Turk, with one companion, had started for Abyssinia in 1588; the two men were shipwrecked on the Arabian coast, and held as prisoners for seven years.

It took him nearly twenty years more of work and war to induce the King to accept the Roman faith, and then at the summit of his success he died within a few days. But the opportunity was too good to be lost, and at once a fresh Patriarch, Alphonso Mendez, set sail for Abyssinia, where he arrived in the autumn of the following year, and almost immediately there followed a public profession of the Roman faith by the King and many of his nobles and officials, and



wholesale edicts abolishing the old faith, replacing it by the new, and conferring the Church property on the newcomers.

This, however, was the beginning of the end; there were risings in all parts of the country, rebellions in Gojam and Lasta, and general disaffection. Rivers of blood were shed, but nothing would induce the mass of the population to accept the new doctrines, and not all the efforts of Mendez—an able man, and a cruel and intolerant bigot—backed by the power of the King, could succeed in delaying the inevitable.

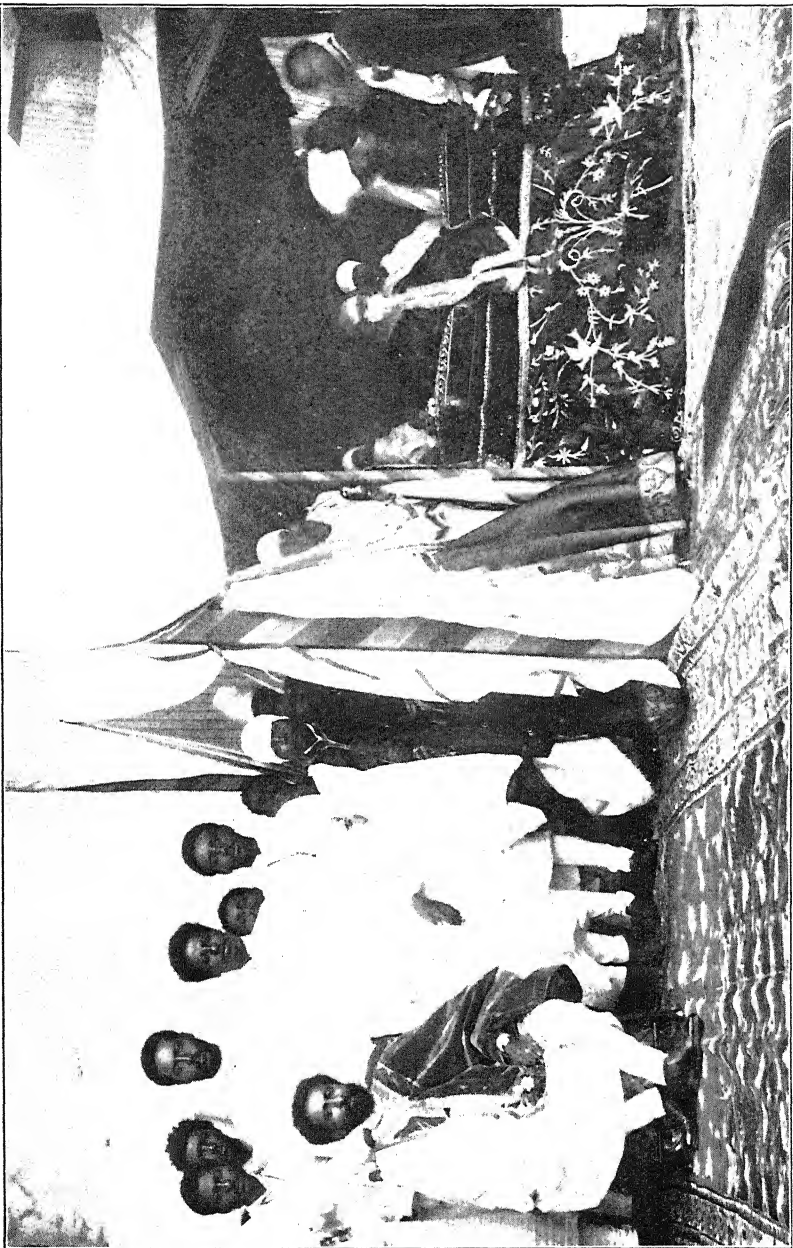
The King was at last forced to give way, and edicts re-establishing the Alexandrian religion were issued amid the general and intense joy of the people, thus proving once again the remarkable attachment of this strange nation to their own form of belief.

The King died soon afterwards, and his son expelled Mendez and his associates. These men would not, however, leave in peace, and after intriguing against the King with some of his disaffected subjects, they were sold by the latter to the Turks. The Turks robbed them, and then held them to ransom; they then passed them on to Suakin, where the same fate befell them again. It was not until 1636 that the unhappy Mendez reached Goa, with two of his followers; the other four had endeavoured to return to Abyssinia, but had been either hanged or decapitated on the way.

And so ended this second attempt, even more disastrously than the first, leaving the Church of Abyssinia in undisputed possession of the field, a position which they have retained until now.

Abunas have been appointed, more or less regularly, from Alexandria; sometimes there have been two or even three rival Abunas in the field; sometimes there has been an interval—on one occasion as long as twenty-five years—when there has been no Abuna at all.

Minor changes have been made in the constitution of the Church, and the respective positions of the Abuna and the



H.I.M. the Empress Zauditu (under the canopy) and H.I.H. Tafari Makonnen (seated), assisting at the Dance of the Priests at the religious festival of the Maskal. As usual at public functions the Empress is closely veiled.



Echege, the head of the monastic establishments, notably by the Emperor Menelik.

But in all essentials, in constitution and in doctrines, the Church remains to-day as it is has been described in another chapter—unchanged, unprogressive, and reactionary.

Bruce wrote that there was no country in the world where there were so many churches, and I have seen an estimate which I should think was well under the mark—of 3,000 for Shoa, 1,100 for Gojam, and 2,600 for the districts of Gondar and Axum. For even small villages have two or three churches each, and it is a popular axiom that he who has erected a church has atoned for every sin.

Broadly speaking, their doctrine is that of the Coptic Church. They do not, however, believe in the doctrines of the immaculate conception or of purgatory; they partake of Communion in both kinds, using unfermented wine mixed with water, and do not believe in actual transubstantiation. Infants are given Communion on baptism.

Their fasts are observed with astonishing strictness, and last for long periods; in addition to the usual fasts on Wednesday and Friday throughout the year, they have forty days before Christmas, fifty-six before Easter, and fourteen days before the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in August.

Baptism is given to male children forty days, and to females eighty days after birth; and in the case of adults they are wholly immersed three times.

They allow no images of any kind in their churches, nor any crucifixes, though these buildings are always plentifully adorned with paintings.

Their canon of scriptures is of much interest; the old Ethiopic version is supposed to have been completed before the sixth century.

In the Old Testament there are forty-six books in all, including all those in the Septuagint, and a number of others, notably the Book of Enoch, which, although well known to the early writers, began to be discredited in the third

and fourth centuries, and was ultimately banned by the Church. It was entirely lost from about A.D. 800, until Bruce discovered a copy in Ethiopic in Abyssinia towards the end of the eighteenth century. In the New Testament there are thirty-five books, including a book of canon law which is counted as eight.

Their *Calendar of Saints* is a most quaint and interesting production ; it was published in full by Harris in 1843 in the book describing his mission to Abyssinia in 1841, under the title of *Highlands of Ethiopia*. Included among the saints are Pontius Pilate and his wife, and some of the miracles attributed to the others are really wonderful. For example, Bebnuda, a martyr of Tentyra, was hung on a palm-tree which bore fruit the very same hour ; Pistaurus, an ascetic of Maksur, was seen to walk about at Heraclea after he was beheaded ; Aaron when sick made roasted pigeons fly into his mouth ; and Johannes extracted a serpent from the womb of a princess.

That the whole fabric of the original tenets of their Church is overlaid with a mass of gross superstition is unfortunately only too obvious ; it is due, doubtless, to the vicissitudes through which the Church has passed, to the perpetual and invincible ignorance of the bulk of the priesthood, and to the composite nature of their Church tradition, consisting, as it does, of a pagan, Egyptian, Jewish, Coptic, and Latin evolution. That elements of all these forms of worship enter into their present-day religion cannot be doubted by those who have witnessed their ceremonies, examined their ecclesiastical robes and furniture, and studied their customs. And, indeed, it would be strange if it were not so, for this ancient people are themselves a combination of a number of different strains and races, drawn from both Asia and Africa, combining to form not only an interesting historical study, but a curious and baffling modern problem in the world of to-day, into which they have only comparatively recently emerged.

## APPENDIX A

LIST OF THE SOVEREIGNS OF ABYSSINIA FROM 4530 B.C. : TOGETHER  
WITH COVERING LETTER FROM H.I.H. TAFARI MAKONNEN

*Translation of Covering Letter*

" May this reach my honourable friend Mr. Rey. Greetings to you.

" As you ask me to send you the names of the Ethiopian Kings and the history of the Ethiopian Kings of Kings (Emperors), herewith I have taken a copy and send it to you.

" After the date of these, if you want more, I will write to you. I am very glad that you have asked me about the history of Abyssinia. I hope that your thoughts should be successful in future."

Written on the 11th day of Sane, 1914,<sup>1</sup> at the town of Addis Ababa.

Seal of Ras Tafari.

<sup>1</sup> In the European calender this is 19th June, 1922.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE SOVEREIGNS OF ETHIOPIA

### *Explanatory Note*

THE List of Kings is printed in the exact form of which it was received, and in literal translation. The dates given in the last two columns are those of the terminations of the reigns of the sovereigns, firstly according to the year of the creation of the world (which the Abyssinians place at 5,500 before the birth of Christ), and secondly reckoned before or after the birth of Christ, as the case may be, according to the Abyssinian calendar.

For purposes of present-day comparison, it should be remembered that the Abyssinian calendar is seven or eight years behind ours, according to the period of the year, i.e. eight years from 1st January to 10th September (11th September in the Abyssinian leap year which follows ours), and seven years from 11th (or 12th) September to 31st December.

This difference is not of course the same all the way back throughout the List of Kings, as the revisions of the calendar took place at various dates throughout the period, but it is near enough for rough comparison.

Thus the year 550 of the creation of the world (Alexandrian era), which the Abyssinians regard as the year 1, is for us A.D. 8; and the last year given in the present List of Kings, viz. 1779, is for us 1787.

I. TRIBE OR POSTERITY OF ORI OR ARAM			
<i>Numerical Order.</i>	<i>Names of the Sovereigns</i>	<i>Length of Reign</i>	<i>Year of the World Before Christ</i>
I.	Ori or Aram	60	970-1030 4470
II.	Gariak I	66	1096 4404
III.	Gannkam	83	1179 4321
IV.	Borsa (Queen)	67	1246 4254
V.	Gariak II	60	1306 4194
VI.	Djan I	80	1386 4114
VII.	Djan II	60	1446 4054
VIII.	Senefrou	20	1466 4034
IX.	Zeenabzamin	58	1524 3976
X.	Sahlan	60	1584 3916
XI.	Elaryan	80	1664 3836
XII.	Nimroud	60	1724 3776



<i>Numerical Order.</i>	<i>Names of the Sovereigns</i>	<i>Length of Reign</i>	<i>Year of the World</i>	<i>Before Christ</i>
XIII.	Eylouka (Queen)	45	1769	3731
XIV.	Saloug	30	1799	3701
XV.	Kharid	72	1871	3629
XVI.	Hogeb	100	1971	3529
XVII.	Makaws	70	2041	3459
XVIII.	Assa	30	2071	3429
XIX.	Affar	50	2121	3379
XX.	Milanos	62	2183	3317
XXI.	Soliman Tehagui	73	2256	3244

*Total: 21 sovereigns of the Tribe of Ori.*

From the Deluge until the fall

of the Tower of Babel

531 2787 2713

## II. SOVEREIGNTY OF THE TRIBE OF KAM

### AFTER THE FALL OF THE TOWER OF BABEL

<i>Numerical Order</i>	<i>Names of the Sovereigns</i>	<i>Length of Reign</i>	<i>Year of the World</i>	<i>Before Christ</i>
I.	Kam	78	2865	2635
II.	Kout (son of the preceding)	50	2915	2585
III.	Habassi	40	2955	2545
IV.	Sebtah	30	2985	2515
V.	Elektron	30	3015	2485
VI.	Neber	30	3045	2455
VII.	Amen	21	3066	2434
VIII.	Nehasset Nais (Queen)	30	3096	2404
IX.	Horkam	29	3125	2375
X.	Saba II	30	3155	2345
XI.	Sofard	30	3185	2315
XII.	Askndou	25	3210	2290
XIII.	Hohey	35	3245	2255
XIV.	Adglag	20	3265	2235
XV.	Adgala	30	3295	2205
XVI.	Lakniduga	25	3320	2180
XVII.	Manturay	35	3355	2145
XVIII.	Rakhu	30	3385	2115
XIX.	Sabe I	30	3415	2085
XX.	Azagan	30	3445	2055
XXI.	Sousel Atozanis	20	3465	2035
XXII.	Amen II	15	3480	2020
XXIII.	Ramenpahte	20	3500	2000
XXIV.	Wanuna	3 days	—	—
XXV.	Piori I	15	3515	1985

*Total: 25 sovereigns of the tribe of Kam, plus 21 sovereigns of the tribe of Ori.—Grand total, 46 sovereigns.*

III. AGDAZAN DYNASTY OF THE POSTERITY OF THE KINGDOM OF  
JOCTAN.

<i>Numerical Order</i>	<i>Names of the Sovereigns</i>	<i>Length of Reign</i>	<i>Year of the World</i>	<i>Before Christ</i>
I.	Akbunas Saba II	55	3570	1930
II.	Nakehte Kalnis	40	3610	1871
III.	Kasiyope (Queen)	19	3629	1890
IV.	Sabe II	15	3644	1856
V.	Etiyopus I	56	3700	1800
VI.	Lakndun Nowarari	30	3730	1770
VII.	Tutimheb	20	3750	1750
VIII.	Herhator I	20	3770	1730
IX.	Etiyopus II	30	3800	1700
X.	Senuka I	17	3817	1683
XI.	Bonu I	8	3825	1675
XII.	Mumazes (Queen)	4	3829	1671
XIII.	Aruas (daughter of preceding)	7 months	—	—
XIV.	Amen Asro I	30	3859	1641
XV.	Ori (or Aram) II	30	3889	1611
XVI.	Piori II	15	3904	1596
XVII.	Amen Emhat I	40	3944	1556
XVIII.	Tsawi	15	3959	1541
XIX.	Aktissanis	10	3969	1531
XX.	Mandes	17	3986	1514
XXI.	Protawos	33	4019	1481
XXII.	Amoy	21	4040	1460
XXIII.	Konsi Hendawi	5	4045	1455
XXIV.	Bonu II	2	4047	1453
XXV.	Sebi III (Kefe)	15	4062	1438
XXVI.	Djagons	20	4082	1418
XXVII.	Senuka II	10	4092	1408
XXVIII.	Angabo I (Zaka Laarwe)	50	4142	1358
XXIX.	Miamur	2 days	—	—
XXX.	Helena (Queen)	11	4153	1347
XXXI.	Zagdur I	40	4193	1307
XXXII.	Her Hator II	30	4223	1277
XXXIII.	Her Hator (Za Sagado) III	1	4224	1276
XXXIV.	Akate (Za Sagado) IV	20	4244	1256
XXXV.	Titon Satiyo	10	4254	1246
XXXVI.	Hermantu I	5 months	—	—
XXXVII.	Amen Emhat II	5	4259	1241
XXXVIII.	Konsab I	5	4264	1236
XXXIX.	Sannib II	5	4269	1231
XL.	Sanuka III	5	4274	1226
XLI.	Angabo II	40	4314	1186
XLII.	Amen Astate	30	4344	1156

Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns	Length of Reign	Year of the World	Before Christ
XLIII.	Herhor	16	4360	1140
XLIV.	Wiyankihi I	9	4369	1131
XLV.	Pinotsem I	17	4386	1114
XLVI.	Pinotsem II	41	4427	1073
XLVII.	Massaherta	16	4443	1057
XLVIII.	Ramenkoperm	14	4457	1043
XLIX.	Pinotsem III	7	4464	1036
L.	Sabi IV	10	4474	1026
LI.	Tawasaya Dews	13	4487	1013
LII.	Makeda	31	4518	982

*Of the posterity of Ori up to the reign of Makeda  
98 sovereigns reigned over Ethiopia before the  
advent of Menelik I.*

#### IV. DYNASTY OF MENELIK I.

Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns	Length of Reign	Year of the World	Before Christ
I.	Menelik I	25	4582 <sup>1</sup>	957
II.	Hanyon	1	4544	956
III.	Sera I (Tomai)	26	4570	930
IV.	Amen Hotep Zagdur	31	4601	899
V.	Aksumay Ramissu	20	4621	879
VI.	Awseyo Sera II	38	4659	841
VII.	Tawasya II	21	4680	820
VIII.	Abralyus Wiyankihi II	32	4712	788
IX.	Aksumay Warada Tsahay	23	4735	765
X.	Kashta Hanyon	13	4748	752
XI.	Sabaka II	12	4760	740
XII.	Nicauta Kandake (Queen)	10	4770	730
XIII.	Tsawi Terhak Warada Nagash	49	4819	681
XIV.	Erda Amen Awseya	6	4825	675
XV.	Gasiyo Eskikafir	—	—	—
XVI.	Nuatmeawn	4	4829	671
XVII.	Tomadyon Piyankihi III	12	4841	659
XVIII.	Amen Asero	16	4857	643
XIX.	Piyankihi IV (Awtet)	34	4891	609
XX.	Zaware Nebret Aspurta	41	4932	568
XXI.	Saifay Harsiataw II	12	4944	556
XXII.	Ramhay Nastossanan	14	4958	542
XXIII.	Handu Wuha Abra	11	4969	531
XXIV.	Safelya Sabakon	31	5000	500
XXV.	Agalbus Sepekos	22	5022	478
XXVI.	Psmenit Waradanegash	21	5043	457

<sup>1</sup> Sæ. This date should obviously be 4543.

<i>Numerical Order</i>	<i>Names of the Sovereigns</i>	<i>Length of Reign</i>	<i>Year of the World</i>	<i>Before Christ</i>
xxvii.	Awseya Tarakos	12	5055	445
xxviii.	Kanaz Psmis (son of preceding)	13	5068	432
xxix.	Apras	10	5078	422
xxx.	Kashta Walda Ahuhu	20	5098	402
xxxi.	Elalion Taake	10	5108	392
xxxii.	Atserk Amen III	10	5118	382
xxxiii.	Atserk Amen IV	10	5128	372
xxxiv.	Hadina (Queen)	10	5138	362
xxxv.	Atserk Amen V	10	5148	352
xxxvi.	Atserk Amen VI	10	5158	342
xxxvii.	Nikawla Kandake (Queen)	10	5168	332
xxxviii.	Bassyo	7	5175	325
xxxix.	Akawsis Kandake III (Queen)	10	5185	315
xl.	Arkamen II	10	5195	305
xli.	Awtet Arawura	10	5205	295
xlII.	Kolas II (Kaletro)	10	5215	285
xlIII.	Zawre Nebrat	16	5231	269
xlIV.	Stiyo	14	5245	255
xlV.	Safay	13	5258	242
xlVI.	Nikosis Kandake IV (Queen)	10	5268	232
xlVII.	Ramhay Arkamen IV	10	5278	222
xlVIII.	Feliya Hernekhit	15	5293	207
xlIX.	Hende Awkerara	20	5313	187
l.	Agabu Baseheran	10	5323	177
li.	Sulay Kawawmenun	20	5343	157
liI.	Messelme Kerarmer	8	5351	149
liII.	Nagey Bsente	10	5361	139
liV.	Etbenukawer	10	5371	129
liV.	Safeliya Abramen	20	5391	109
liVI.	Sanay	10	5401	99
liVII.	Awsena (Queen)	11	5412	88
liVIII.	Dawit II	10	5422	78
liX.	Agibul	8	5430	70
liX.	Bawawl	10	5440	60
liXI.	Barawas	10	5450	50
liXI.	Dinedad	10	5460	40
liXIII.	Amoy Mahasse	5	5465	35
liXIV.	Nicotnis Kandake V	10	5475	25
liXV.	Nalke	5	5480	20
liXVI.	Luzay	12	5492	8
liXVII.	Bazen Before Christ	8	5500	—
	After Christ	9	5509	9

*Before Christ 165 sovereigns reigned.*

## V. THOSE WHO REIGNED AFTER THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

<i>Numerical Order</i>	<i>Names of the Sovereigns</i>	<i>Length of Reign</i>	<i>Year of the World</i>	<i>After Christ</i>
I.	Sartu Tsenfa Assegd	21	5530	30
II.	Akaptah Tsenfa Ared	8	5538	38
III.	Horemtaku	2	5540	40
IV.	Garsemot Kandake VI	10	5550	50
V.	Hatoza Bahr Asaged	28	5578	78
VI.	Mesenh Germasir	7	5585	85
VII.	Metwa Germa Asfar	9	5594	94
VIII.	Adgale II	10 years & 6 months	5604	104
IX.	Agba	1	5605	105
		6 months of Adgale & 6 months		
X.	Serada	16	5621	121
XI.	Malis Alameda	4	5625	125
XII.	Hakabe Nasohi Tsiyon	6	5631	131
XIII.	Hakli Sergway	12	5643	143
XIV.	Dedme Zaray	10	5653	153
XV.	Awtet	2	5655	155
XVI.	Alaly Bagamay	7	5662	162
XVII.	Awadu Jan Asagad	30	5692	192
XVIII.	Zagun Tsion Hegez	5	5697	197
XIX.	Rema Tsion Geza	3	5700	200
XX.	Azegan Malbagad	7	5707	207
XXI.	Gafale Seb Asagad	1	5708	208
XXII.	Tsegay Beze Wark	4	5712	212
XXIII.	Gaza Agdur	9	5721	221
XXIV.	Agduba Asgwegwe	8	5729	229
XXV.	Dawiza	1	5730	230
XXVI.	Wakana (Queen)	2 days	—	—
XXVII.	Hadawz	4 months	—	—
XXVIII.	Ailassan Sagal	3	5733	233
XXIX.	Asfehi Asfeha	14	5747	247
XXX.	Atsgaba Seifa Arad	6	5753	253
XXXI.	Ayba	17	5770	270
XXXII.	Tsaham Laknduga	9	5779	279
XXXIII.	Tsegab	10	5789	289
XXXIV.	Tazer	10	5799	299
XXXV.	Ahywa Sofya (Queen)	7	5806	306

These thirty-five sovereigns at the time of Akapta Tsenfa Arad<sup>1</sup> had been christianised by the Apostle Saint Matthew. There were few men who did not believe, for they had heard the words of the

<sup>1</sup> From A.D. 30 to A.D. 38.

gospel. After this Jen Daraba, favourite of the Queen of Ethiopia, Garsemat Kandake,<sup>1</sup> crowned by Gabre Hawariat Kandake, had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem according to the law of Orit (the ancient law), and on his return Philip the Apostle taught him the gospel, and after he had made him believe the truth he sent him back, baptising him in the name of the Trinity. The latter (the Queen's favourite), on his return to his country, taught by word of mouth the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ and baptised them. Those who were baptised, not having found an Apostle to teach them the Gospel, had been living offering sacrifices to God according to the ancient prescription and the Jewish Law.<sup>2</sup>

VI. CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE CHRISTIAN SOVEREIGNS WHO RECEIVED BAPTISM AND FOLLOWED COMPLETELY THE LAW OF THE GOSPEL.

<i>Numerical Order</i>	<i>Names of the Sovereigns</i>	<i>Length of Reign</i>	<i>Year of the World</i>	<i>After Christ</i>
I.	Ahywa (her regnal name was Sofya, and she was the mother of Abreha Atsbeha. The time of her reign was 7 years)			
II.	Abreha Atsbeha (partly with his mother) In the year 327 after Jesus Christ—11 years after the reign of these two sovereigns (mother and son)—the gospel was introduced into Ethiopia by Abba Salama, and the Queen Sofya, who was baptised, became a good Christian	26	5832	332
III.	Atsbeha (alone)	12	5844	344
IV.	Asfeh Dalz	7	5851	351
V.	Sahle	14	5865	365
VI.	Arfed Gebra Maskal	4	5869	369
VII.	Adhana I (Queen)	5	5874	374
VIII.	Riti	1	5875	375
IX.	Asfeh II	1	5876	376
X.	Atsbeha II	5	5881	381
XI.	Amey	15	5896	396
XII.	Abreha II	7 months	—	—
XIII.	Illassahl	2	—	—
XIV.	Elagabaz I	2	5898	398

<sup>1</sup> From A.D. 40 to A.D. 50.

<sup>2</sup> It will of course be observed that the above note is self-contradictory as regards the period of the introduction of Christianity into the country, and it is also at variance on this matter with the statement made in the next section.

Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns	Length of Reign	Year of the World	After Christ
xv.	Suhal	4	5902	402
xvi.	Abreha III	10	5912	412
xvii.	Adhana II (Queen)	6	5918	418
xviii.	Yoab	10	5928	428
xix.	Tsaham I	2	5930	430
xx.	Amey II	1	5931	431
xxi.	Sahle Ahzob	2	5933	433
xxii.	Tsebah Mahana Kristos	3	5936	436
xxiii.	Tsaham II	2	5938	438
xxiv.	Elagabaz II	6	5944	444
xxv.	Agabi	1	5945	445
xxvi.	Lewi	2	5947	447
xxvii.	Ameda III	3	5950	450
xxviii.	Armah Dawit	14	5964	464
xxix.	Amsi	5	5969	469
xxx.	Salayba	9	5978	478
xxxi.	Alameda	8	5986	486
xxxii.	Pazena Ezana	7	5993	493

*Of the posterity of Sofya and Abreha Atsbeha until the reign of Pazena Ezana 31 sovereigns reigned over Ethiopia : from Ori until the reign of Pazena Ezana 230 sovereigns.*

VII. DYNASTY OF ATSE (EMPEROR) KALEB UNTIL GEDAJAN				
Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns	Length of Reign	Year of the World	After Christ
I.	Kaleb	30	6023	523
II.	Za Israel	1 month	—	—
III.	Gabra Maskal	14	6037	537
IV.	Kostantinos	28	6065	565
V.	Wasan Sagad	15	6080	580
VI.	Fere Sanay	23	6103	603
VII.	Advenz	20	6123	623
VIII.	Akala Wedem	8	6131	631
IX.	Germa Asafar	15	6146	646
X.	Zergaz	10	6156	656
XI.	Dagena Mikael	26	6182	682
XII.	Bahr Ekla	19	6201	701
XIII.	Gum	24	6225	725
XIV.	Asguagum	5	6230	730
XV.	Latem	16	6246	746
XVI.	Talatam	21	6267	767
XVII.	Gadagosh	13	6280	780
XVIII.	Aizar Eskakatir	$\frac{1}{2}$ day	—	—

Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns	Length of Reign	Year of the World	After Christ
XIX.	Dedem	5	6285	785
XX.	Wededem	10	6295	795
XXI.	Wudme Asfare	30	6325	825
XXII.	Armah	5	6330	830
XXIII.	Degennajan	19	6349	849
XXIV.	Gedajan	1	6350	850
XXV.	Gudit	40	6390	890
XXVI.	Anbase Wedem	20	6410	910
XXVII.	Del Naad	10	6420	920

*27 sovereigns of the posterity of Kaleb ; 257 in all.*

VIII. SOVEREIGNS ISSUED FROM ZAGWE				
Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns	Length of Reign	Year of the World	After Christ
I.	Mara Takla Haymanot (his regnal name was Zagwe)	13	6433	933
II.	Tatawdem	40	6473	973
III.	Jan Seyum	40	6513	1013
IV.	Germa Seyum	40	6553	1053
V.	Yermrhana Kristos	40	6593	1093
VI.	Kedus Arbe (Samt)	40	6633	1133
VII.	Lalibala	40	6673	1173
VIII.	Nacuto Laab	40	6713	1213
IX.	Yatbarak	17	6730	1230
X.	Mayrari	15	6745	1245
XI.	Harbay	8	6753	1253

*Of the posterity of Mara Takla Haymanot (whose regnal name was Zagwe) until the reign of Harbay  
II sovereigns reigned over Ethiopia ; 268  
sovereigns in all.*

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE 8 GENERATIONS OF AN ISRAELITISH DYNASTY, WHO WERE NOT RAISED TO THE THRONE, DURING THE PERIOD OF THE REIGN OF THE POSTERITY OF ZAGWE.

Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns
I.	Mahbara Wedem
II.	Agbea Tsyon
III.	Tsinfa Arad
IV.	Nagash Zare
V.	Asfeh
VI.	Yakob
VII.	Bahr Asagad
VIII.	Edem Asagad

*These eight did not mount the throne.*



IX. CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE SOVEREIGNS FROM YEKUNO AMLAK, EMPEROR, AND OF HIS POSTERITY, ALL ISSUED FROM THE

ANCIENT DYNASTIES WHICH WERE RAISED TO THE THRONE.

Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns	Length of Reign	Year of the World	After Christ
I.	Yekuno Amlak	15	6768	1268
II.	Yasbeo Tseyon	9	6777	1277
III.	Tsenfa Arad	1	6778	1278
IV.	Hesba Asagad	1	6779	1279
V.	Kedme Asagad	1	6780	1280
VI.	Jan Asagad	1	6781	1281
VII.	Sabea Asagad	1	6782	1282
VIII.	Wedma Ared	15	6797	1297
IX.	Amda Tseyon	30	6827	1327
X.	Saifa Ared	28	6855	1355
XI.	Wedma Asfare	10	6865	1365
XII.	Dawit	30	6895	1395
XIII.	Tewodoros	4	6899	1399
XIV.	Yeshak	15	6914	1414
XV.	Andreyas	6 months	—	—
XVI.	Hesba Nañ	4	6918	1418
XVII.	Bedl Nañ	1	6919	1419
(6 months with Andreyas & 6 months)				
XVIII.	Amde Tseyon	7	6926	1426
XIX.	Zara Yakob	34	6960	1460
XX.	Boeda Maryam	10	6970	1470
XXI.	Iskender	16	6986	1486
XXII.	Amda Tseyon	1	6987	1487
XXIII.	Naod	13	7000	1500

*Of the posterity of Yekuno Amlak up to the reign of Naod 23 sovereigns ruled over Ethiopia ; in all 291 sovereigns.*

X. ELEVATION TO THE THRONE OF ATSE (EMPEROR) LEBNA DENGEL, AND THE INVASION OF ETHIOPIA BY GRAN.

Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns	Length of Reign	Year of the World	After Christ
I.	Lebna Dengel	32	7032	1532
II.	Galawdewos	19	7051	1551
III.	Minas	4	7055	1555

*Grand Total : 294 sovereigns.*

*Fifteen years after Atse (Emperor) Lebna Dengel came to the throne Gran devastated Ethiopia for fifteen years.*

## XI. THE HOUSE OF GONDAR

Numerical Order	Names of the Sovereigns	Length of Reign	Year of the World	After Christ
I.	Sartsa Dengel	34	7089	1589
II.	Yakob	9	7098	1598
III.	Za Dengel	1	7099	1599
IV.	Susneyos	28	7127	1627
V.	Fasil	35	7162	1662
VI.	Degu-Johannis	15	7177	1677
VII.	Adyam Sagad Iyasu	25	7202	1702
VIII.	Takla Haymanot	2	7204	1704
IX.	Tewoflus	3	7207	1707
X.	Yostos	4	7211	1711
XI.	Dawit	5	7216	1716
XII.	Bakaffa	9	7225	1725
XIII.	Birhan Sagad Iyasu	24	7249	1749
XIV.	Iyoas	15	7264	1764
XV.	Johannis	5 months & 5 days	—	—
XVI.	Takla Haymanot	8	7272	1772
XVII.	Solomon	2	7274	1774
XVIII.	Takla Giyorgis	5	7279	1779

*Of the posterity of Sartsa Dengel up to the reign of King Takla Giyorgis 18 sovereigns reigned over Ethiopia. From Ori to Takla Giyorgis the total is 312 sovereigns.*

## SOVEREIGNS OF ABYSSINIA SUBSEQUENT TO THE FOREGOING LIST.

Although the list given me by the Regent concludes in the year given as 1779 (Abyssinian), I have thought it desirable to bring the table up to date, and have completed the following list from various sources.

In this connection it should be noted that for some fifty years prior to the reign of the last king mentioned in the foregoing list (i.e. since about 1730 up to the advent of Theodore in 1855) the kings had exercised no real power, and had been murdered, deposed, restored and driven out again, or treated as nonentities by anyone of the great Rases or semi-independent kings who were strong enough to maintain themselves against their rivals, such as, for example, Ras Mikael Suhul of Tigre (1730-80), Ras Guksa of Amhara, a Galla (1790-1819), and the son (Ras Marye) and grandson (Ras Ali) of the latter.

In 1813, indeed, no less than six nominal "Kings of Kings of Ethiopia" were all alive, having been successively turned out of office by others.

The names of all these kings (who were actually raised to the throne) are, however, given below in order to maintain continuity, together with the dates (according to our calendar) of their chequered reigns :

Yasus	1784-88	Gigar	1821-26
Takla Haymanot	1788-89	Baeda Maryam III	1826
Iskias	1789-95	Gigar (again)	1826-30
Baeda Maryam	1795-97	Iyasu IV	1830-32
Junus	1797	Gabra Kristos	1832
Adimo	1797-99	Sahala Dengel	1832-40
Egwala Sion	1799-1818	Johannes III	1840-41
Joas	1818-21	Sahala Dengel (again)	1841-55

From this period dates the re-establishment of the empire, and the rapid extension of the powers of its sovereigns. From then until to-day they are :

Theodore	1855-68	
John IV	1868-89	
Menelik II	1889-1913	
Lej Yasu	1913-16	
Zauditu (Empress)		} 1916
Tafari Makonnen (Regent & Heir)		

## APPENDIX B

RAINFALL IN ADDIS ABABA. 1902-1926.

# APPENDIX B

MONTHLY RAINFALL AT ADDIS ABABA IN MILLIMETRES DURING THE 21 YEARS 1902-15, 1919-21, 1923-6.

Year	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
1902	0.4	64.8	37.6	111.1	60.9	142.5	205.0	167.3	129.7	16.6	9.4	0.0	945.3
1903	32.7	25.4	94.6	87.3	267.5	189.2	276.5	189.3	222.3	28.3	0.0	0.0	1414.1
1904	0.0	20.4	126.3	31.2	40.7	110.1		(Figures not available)					
1905	(Figures not available)						293.5	351.6	113.0	1.2	44.5	0.0	—
1906	8.7	156.0	188.7	103.1	60.5	131.3	379.7	361.7	119.2	22.5	27.8	0.0	1553.5
1907	0.0	20.2	11.3	140.0	48.9	47.0	192.6	283.4	208.2	13.2	80.9	0.0	1045.5
1908	44.4	7.9	10.3	66.1	2.5	73.6	—	387.1	201.1	48.5	11.5	0.0	—
1909	49.2	0.0	21.3	65.2	120.7	221.5	220.6	371.8	155.7	0.0	17.5	0.0	1243.5
1910	0.0	0.0	25.5	55.8	73.2	121.0	294.6	368.8	256.7	21.9	0.0	0.0	1217.5
1911	6.7	2.7	64.4	49.9	42.4	124.6	296.5	218.5	181.7	32.3	67.8	0.0	1104.1
1912	54.0	132.3	58.2	40.7	20.6	171.6	328.1	263.5	88.4	3.7	0.0	0.3	1161.9
1913	0.0	69.9	70.3	140.8	112.4	142.6	208.4	306.8	117.0	7.2	0.0	0.0	1175.4
1914	16.9	138.2	63.2	130.3	20.8	89.5	210.2	312.6	331.4	83.3	0.1	28.5	1495.2
1915	2.5	23.2	105.1	126.2	133.1	89.0	188.6	229.6	241.7	16.9	12.4	0.0	1168.3
1916	(Figures not available)												
1917	(Figures not available)												
1918	(Figures not available)												
1919	31.5	25.7	46.6	26.8	27.8	113.4	305.1	230.9	158.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	945.6
1920	0.0	0.0	54.1	66.0	8.1	137.0	286.1	289.9	175.2	10.3	0.0	0.0	1028.7
1921	1.0	1.5	0.0	26.1	64.9	113.4	313.4	297.9	218.9	31.1	0.0	0.0	1068.2
1922	(Figures not available)												
1923	0.0	90.3	39.2	66.8	79.4	74.3	220.2	295.5	248.0	1.7	82.4	0.0	1197.0
1924	11.1	60.5	138.6	67.1	63.7	89.2	290.9	304.3	135.5	6.0	0.0	1.9	1168.6
1925	0.0	27.2	20.9	22.0	185.4	159.6	188.9	186.3	193.7	50.7	76.5	11.6	1129.3
1926	14.7	47.3	96.0	190.3	224.0	119.2	199.3	353.8	208.0	15.0	18.9	1.0	1494.7
Average	13.7	45.7	63.6	80.1	80.4	121.6	252.5	288.5	185.2	20.5	22.3	2.1	1192.0

(Compiled from data given in the "Courrier d'Ethiopie.")

## APPENDIX C

NOTES EXCHANGED BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND ITALY  
REGARDING LAKE TSANA, 1925, TOGETHER WITH EXTRACTS FROM  
CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING THE ABOVE AGREEMENT, 1926.

NOTES EXCHANGED BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND  
ITALY REGARDING LAKE TSANA, 1925.

No. 1

*Sir R. Graham to Signor Mussolini*

*Rome, 14th December, 1925.*

M. LE PRÉSIDENT DU CONSEIL,

Your Excellency is well aware of the vital importance to Egypt and the Sudan of maintaining and, if possible, increasing the volume of water for irrigation purposes available in those countries from the Blue and White Niles and their tributary streams. Various schemes for the purpose have been carried out or are projected, and you are informed of the negotiations undertaken at Addis Ababa by His Majesty's Government, acting in a fiduciary capacity for the Sudan Government and mindful of Egyptian interests in the matter, in order to obtain a concession from the Government of Abyssinia for the construction of a barrage at Lake Tsana with a view to storing its waters for use in the Blue Nile. So far these negotiations have led to no practical result.

In November 1919 the delegates of the Italian Government then in London were good enough to offer Italian co-operation in this question in the following terms :

" In view of the predominating interests of Great Britain in respect of the control of the waters of Lake Tsana, Italy offers Great Britain her support, in order that she may obtain from Ethiopia the concession to carry out works of barrage in the lake itself, within the Italian sphere of influence, pending the delimitation of the extent of the territorial zone to be recognised as pertaining to Great Britain in respect of the latter's predominant hydraulic interests, and pending a just consideration of the reservation on behalf of Italy by the Tripartite Agreement likewise in respect of her hydraulic interests. Italy further offers her support to Great Britain in order that the latter may obtain from Ethiopia the right to construct and maintain a motor road between Lake Tsana and the Sudan.

" Italy requests the support of Great Britain in order that she

may obtain from the Ethiopian Government the concession to construct and to run a railway from the frontier of Eritrea to the frontier of Italian Somaliland, which railway according to the Tripartite Agreement must pass to the west of Addis Ababa. It is understood that this railway, together with all the necessary works for its construction and for its running, must have an entirely free passage across the above-mentioned motor road.

"Italy requests from Great Britain, as she also reserves to herself the right to request from France, an exclusive economic influence in the west of Ethiopia and in the whole of the territory to be crossed by the above-mentioned railway, and the promise to support with the Ethiopian Government all requests for economic concessions regarding the Italian zone."

The above offer was not entertained at the time chiefly owing to the strong objection felt to the idea of allowing a foreign Power to establish any sort of control over the head waters of rivers so vital to the prosperity and even the existence of Egypt and the Sudan. But in view of the relations of mutual confidence so happily existing between our two Governments, His Majesty's Government desire to extend to this question the principle of friendly co-operation which has proved so valuable in other fields. His Britannic Majesty's Government have accordingly further examined the question and recognise that the Italian proposal is not in contradiction with the stipulations of the London Agreement of the 13th December, 1906, since the object of that agreement is to maintain the *status quo* in Ethiopia on the basis of the international instruments indicated in article 1 thereof and the co-ordination of the action of the signatory States to protect their respective interests so that they should not suffer prejudice.

They would therefore welcome the Italian support offered provided that it can be accepted without prejudice to those paramount hydraulic interests of Egypt and the Sudan which the Italian Government have not failed to recognise.

I have therefore the honour, under instructions from His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to request your Excellency's support and assistance at Addis Ababa with the Abyssinian Government in order to obtain from them a concession for His Majesty's Government to construct a barrage at Lake Tsana, together with the right to construct and maintain a motor road for the passage of stores, personnel, &c., from the frontier of the Sudan to the barrage.

His Majesty's Government in return are prepared to support the Italian Government in obtaining from the Abyssinian Government a concession to construct and run a railway from the frontier of



Eritrea to the frontier of Italian Somaliland. It would be understood that this railway, together with all the necessary works for its construction and for its running, would have entirely free passage across the motor road mentioned above.

With this object in view the necessary identic instructions should be sent to the British and Italian representatives in Ethiopia to concert for common action with the Abyssinian Government in order to obtain that the concessions desired by the Governments of Great Britain and Italy regarding Lake Tsana and the construction of a railway to join up Eritrea with Italian Somaliland should be granted contemporaneously. It remains understood that, in the event of one of the two Governments securing the concession sought for while the other Government failed to do so, the Government which had obtained satisfaction would not relax their whole-hearted efforts to secure a corresponding satisfaction for the other Government concerned.

In the event of His Majesty's Government, with the valued assistance of the Italian Government, obtaining from the Abyssinian Government the desired concession on Lake Tsana, they are also prepared to recognise an exclusive Italian economic influence in the west of Abyssinia and in the whole of the territory to be crossed by the above-mentioned railway. They would further promise to support with the Abyssinian Government all Italian requests for economic concessions in the above zone. But such recognition and undertaking are subject to the proviso that the Italian Government on their side, recognising the prior hydraulic rights of Egypt and the Sudan, will engage not to construct on the head waters of the Blue or White Niles or their tributaries or affluents any work which might sensibly modify their flow into the main river. It is understood that the above proviso would not preclude a reasonable use of the waters in question by the inhabitants of the region, even to the extent of constructing dams for hydro-electric power or small reservoirs in minor affluents to store water for domestic purposes, as well as for the cultivation of the food crops necessary to their own subsistence.

His Majesty's Government avail themselves of this opportunity to assure the Italian Government that the construction and operation of the dam will be effected so far as possible with locally recruited labour and will not raise the level of the waters in the lake beyond the maximum hitherto attained during the rainy season. They are therefore confident that the existence of the dam will not only be of value to Egypt and the Sudan but will increase the prosperity and promote the economic progress of the local inhabitants.

I take this opportunity, &c.

R. GRAHAM.

## No. 2 (Translation)

*Ministry for Foreign Affairs,  
Rome, 20th December, 1925.*

M. L'AMBASSADEUR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the note of the 14th December, in which your Excellency, on instructions from your Government, drew my attention to the problem of the irrigation of Egypt and the Sudan and to the negotiations hitherto conducted without result by the British Government to obtain from the Abyssinian Government the concession for the construction of a barrage at Lake Tsana, with the object of storing the waters of the lake to feed the Blue Nile.

Your Excellency recalls in this connection the proposals which were presented in London in November 1919 by the delegates of the Italian Government for an amicable Anglo-Italian co-operation in this question, and you inform me that these proposals were not then accepted owing to the objection which was felt to the idea of allowing a foreign Power to establish any kind of control over the sources of rivers so vital to the prosperity and even the existence of Egypt and the Sudan. But that now, in view of the relations of reciprocal confidence so happily existing between our two Governments, His Britannic Majesty's Government desire to extend to this question the principle of friendly co-operation which has proved so valuable in other fields.

Your Excellency adds that His Britannic Majesty's Government has accordingly proceeded to a more careful examination of the question, and recognises that the Italian proposals are not in contradiction with the provisions of the Agreement of London of the 13th December, 1906, since the object of that agreement is the maintenance of the *status quo* in Ethiopia on the basis of the international instruments indicated in article 1 of the agreement itself, and the co-ordination of the action of the signatory States in the protection of their respective interests so that these should not suffer prejudice.

The British Government, consequently adhering to the Italian proposals, would welcome the support of Italy, provided that it can be accepted without prejudice to those paramount hydraulic interests of Egypt and the Sudan, which the Italian Government themselves have recognised.

Your Excellency, therefore, on instructions from your Government, requests the support and assistance of the Italian Government with the Ethiopian Government in order to obtain from the latter the concession to construct a barrage on Lake Tsana, together with

the right to construct and maintain a motor road for the passage of stores, personnel, &c., from the frontier of the Sudan to the barrage.

Your Excellency declares to me that His Britannic Majesty's Government will in return support the Italian Government in obtaining from the Abyssinian Government the concession to construct and operate a railway from the frontier of Eritrea to the frontier of Italian Somaliland, it being understood that such railway, together with all the necessary works for its construction and operation, shall have free transit across the motor road mentioned above.

With this object, your Excellency adds, the necessary and identic instructions should be sent to the British and Italian representatives in Ethiopia to concert for common action with the Abyssinian Government, in order to obtain that the concessions desired by the British and Italian Governments regarding Lake Tsana and the construction of a railway to connect Eritrea with Italian Somaliland should be granted contemporaneously. It remains understood that, in the event of one of the two Governments securing the concession sought for while the other Government failed to do so, the Government which had obtained satisfaction would not relax their best endeavours to secure a corresponding satisfaction for the other Government concerned.

Your Excellency then states that, in the event of His Majesty's Government, with the effective support of the Italian Government, obtaining from the Abyssinian Government the concession asked for at Lake Tsana, the British Government will also recognise the exclusive character of Italian economic influence in the west of Abyssinia and in the whole of the territory crossed by the above-mentioned railway. The British Government will further support with the Ethiopian Government all Italian requests for economic concessions in the above-mentioned zone. Such recognition and undertaking are, however, subject to the proviso that the Italian Government, on their side, recognising the prior hydraulic rights of Egypt and the Sudan, will engage not to construct on the head waters of the Blue Nile and the White Nile and their tributaries and affluents any work which might sensibly modify their flow into the main river.

Your Excellency finally states that it remains understood that the above proviso would not preclude a reasonable use of the waters in question by the inhabitants of the region, even to the extent of constructing dams for hydro-electric power or small reservoirs in minor affluents for storing water for domestic purposes, as well as for the cultivation of the food products necessary to their own subsistence.

Your Excellency further assures the Italian Government, on

instructions from your Government, that the construction and operation of the dam will be effected, so far as possible, with locally recruited labour, and that the level of the waters of the lake will not be raised beyond the maximum limit hitherto attained during the rainy season. The British Government are therefore confident that the existence of the dam will not only be of value to Egypt and the Sudan, but will increase the prosperity and promote the economic progress of the local populations.

In reply to the above-mentioned declarations and requests of your Excellency, I have the honour to state on my part that the Royal Government have taken note that the British Government recognise the desirability of extending to the question referred to the principle of friendly collaboration which has proved so valuable in other fields; this has been noted with all the more satisfaction, inasmuch as it is my conviction that such co-operation will be the more useful the further it is extended.

The Royal Government have further taken note that His Britannic Majesty's Government are now persuaded that the Italian proposals presented in November 1919 are not in contradiction with the provisions of the Agreement of London of the 13th December, 1906, since the object of that agreement (as Italy has always maintained) is the maintenance of the *status quo* in Ethiopia on the basis of the international agreements indicated in article 1 of the agreement itself and the co-ordination of the action of the signatory States in the protection of their respective interests so that these should not suffer prejudice.

This being granted, although the above-mentioned proposals presented in London in November 1919 formed part of a wider negotiation of a colonial character arising out of the Treaty of London of 1915, a negotiation which had only partial results, the Royal Government nevertheless agree to take up again the proposals in question, especially sharing the desire of the British Government to realise the principle of friendly co-operation, and further trusting that this principle may be continually further extended for the protection and development of the respective Italian and British interests in Ethiopia, naturally on the bases and within the limits of the provisions of the London Agreement of 1906.

I have, therefore, the honour to state to your Excellency that the Royal Government will support the British Government with the Ethiopian Government, in order to obtain from the latter the concession to construct a barrage at Lake Tsana, together with the right to construct and maintain a motor road for the passage of stores, personnel, &c., from the frontier of the Sudan to the barrage.

The Royal Government take note, on the other hand, that the

British Government will, in return, support the Italian Government in obtaining from the Abyssinian Government the concession to construct and operate a railway from the frontier of Eritrea to the frontier of Italian Somaliland, it remaining understood that this railway, together with all the necessary works for its construction and operation, shall have free transit across the motor road mentioned above.

With this object, the Italian Government will send the necessary instructions to the Italian representative in Addis Ababa in an identic sense to those which the British Government will send to their own representative, to concert a common line of action with the Abyssinian Government in order to obtain that the concessions asked for by the British and Italian Governments regarding Lake Tsana and the railway connecting Eritrea and Somaliland should be granted contemporaneously. It remains understood that, in the event of one of the two Governments securing the concession sought by them, while the other failed to do so, the Government which had obtained satisfaction would not relax their most effective efforts to secure a corresponding satisfaction for the other Government concerned, with the object of ensuring that practical execution of the two concessions should, if possible, be contemporaneous.

The Royal Government take note that in the event of His Britannic Majesty's Government, with the effective support of the Italian Government, obtaining from the Abyssinian Government the concession asked for on Lake Tsana, they will recognise the exclusive character of Italian economic influence in the west of Abyssinia and in the whole of the territory to be crossed by the above-mentioned railway, and will also support with the Ethiopian Government all Italian requests for economic concessions in the above zone.

On their side the Italian Government, recognising the prior hydraulic rights of Egypt and the Sudan, engage not to construct on the head waters of the Blue Nile and the White Nile and their tributaries and affluents any work which might sensibly modify their flow into the main river.

I note that His Britannic Majesty's Government have every intention of respecting the existing water rights of the populations of the neighbouring territories which enter into the sphere of exclusive Italian economic influence. It is understood that, in so far as is possible and is compatible with the paramount interests of Egypt and the Sudan, the scheme in contemplation should be so framed and executed as to afford appropriate satisfaction to the economic need of these populations.

Accept, &c.

MUSSOLINI.

CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE  
UNITED KINGDOM AND ITALY OF 14-20TH DECEMBER, 1925, IN  
REGARD TO LAKE TSANA.

No. 1

*Mr. Bentinck to Ras Tafari*

*British Legation,  
Addis Ababa, 9th June, 1926.*

YOUR IMPERIAL HIGHNESS,

In obedience to the instructions which I have received from His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, I have the honour to hand to your Imperial Highness the text of the note which His Majesty's Government addressed last December to the Italian Government asking for their co-operation in the negotiations with the Ethiopian Government regarding Lake Tsana when His Majesty's Government decide to reopen them. A translation of the note in Amharic is attached.

In accordance with article 18 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the notes exchanged between His Majesty's Government and the Italian Government will be laid before the Secretariat of the League, but for reasons of friendship and courtesy the two Governments desire that these notes should first be shown to the Ethiopian Government.

In communicating to your Imperial Highness the text of the British note, I am to express the hope that the Abyssinian Government will find the notes acceptable to them, and I am authorised to offer to you full and frank explanation if you should be in doubt as to the meaning of any points in the British note when I return from England. In the meantime I trust that your Imperial Highness will consider the notes sympathetically.

Sir Austen Chamberlain directs me to add that he hopes that the text of the enclosed note will be sufficient to dispel any misconceptions or malicious rumours which may be current regarding the alleged intentions of His Majesty's Government. Further, Sir Austen Chamberlain directs me to assure your Imperial Highness of the continued friendship of His Majesty's Government, and to express the hope that the Ethiopian Government will find in this exchange of notes only further proof of that friendship, inasmuch as the object which the exchange has in view will, it is hoped, prove to be as beneficial to Abyssinia as to the other countries concerned.

C. BENTINCK.

## No. 2

*Ras Tafari to Mr. Bentinck*

PEACE be with you !

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your note dated the 2nd day of Senié, 1918 (9th June, 1926).

This communication, which is identical with the note I have received from his Excellency Count Colli, the Italian Minister, informs me of the agreement concluded between your respective Governments with a view to obtaining from the Abyssinian Government a concession for the conservancy of the waters of our Lake Tsana for England and a concession for the construction of a railway through Abyssinia for Italy. The fact that you have come to an agreement, and the fact that you have thought it necessary to give us a joint notification of that agreement, make it clear that your intention is to exert pressure, and this, in our view, at once raises a previous question.

The British Government had already entered into negotiations with the Abyssinian Government in regard to its proposal, and we had imagined that, whether that proposal was carried into effect or not, the negotiations would have been concluded with us ; we should never have suspected that the British Government would come to an agreement with another Government regarding our Lake.

This question, which calls for preliminary examination, must therefore be laid before the League of Nations.

Given on the 8th day of Senié, in the year of grace 1918 (15th June, 1926).

TAFARI MAKONNEN,  
*Heir to the Throne of Abyssinia.*

## No. 5

*Ras Tafari to the Secretary-General, League of Nations*

PEACE be with you !

I have the honour to forward herewith copies of the correspondence communicated to us by the British and Italian Governments, constituting an agreement concluded between them without our knowledge in regard to their interests in Abyssinia, and copies of our replies. I also enclose the protest which we are addressing to the States members of the League of Nations, making known that we cannot accept this agreement.

I beg that you will be good enough to communicate these documents to the States members in order that the question may be considered.

Given in the city of Addis Ababa on the 12th day of Senié, in the year of grace 1918 (19th June, 1926).

TAFARI MAKONNEN,  
*Heir to the Throne of Abyssinia.*

Enclosure in No. 5

*To the State Members of the League of Nations*

OUR Government has recently received from the British and Italian Governments identical notes informing us that these Governments have arrived at an agreement to support each other with a view to obtaining a concession for the British Government to undertake the conservancy of the waters of our Lake Tsana, and for the Italian Government to construct a railway through our Empire.

We have been profoundly moved by the conclusion of this agreement arrived at without our being consulted or informed, and by the action of the two Governments in sending us a joint notification.

In the first place, on our admission to the League of Nations we were told that all nations were to be on a footing of equality within the League, and that their independence was to be universally respected, since the purpose of the League is to establish and maintain peace among men in accordance with the will of God.

We were not told that certain members of the League might make a separate agreement to impose their views on another member even if the latter considered those views incompatible with its national interests.

Secondly, one of the subjects covered by the agreement had already been discussed between the British Government and our own, and that no conclusion had yet been reached was due to reasons of whose nature and importance we were fully aware; we had, however, never given any definite reply.

We cannot help thinking, therefore, that in agreeing to support each other in these matters, and in giving us a joint notification of that agreement, the two Governments are endeavouring to exert pressure on us in order to induce us to comply with their demands prematurely, without leaving any time for reflection or consideration for our people's needs.

The people of Abyssinia are anxious to do right, and we have every intention of guiding them along the path of improvement and progress; but throughout their history they have seldom met with foreigners who did not desire to possess themselves of Abyssinian territory and to destroy their independence. With God's help, and thanks to the courage of our soldiers, we have always, come what might, stood proud and free upon our native mountains.

For this reason prudence is needed when we have to convince our



people that foreigners who wish to establish themselves for economic reasons in our country, or on the frontiers between it and their possessions, are genuinely innocent of concealed political aims ; and we doubt whether agreements and joint representations such as those now in question are the best means of instilling that conviction.

Nor must it be forgotten that we have only recently been introduced to modern civilisation, and that our history, glorious though it be, has not prepared us for ready adjustment to conditions which are often quite beyond the range of our experience. Nature herself has never gone forward by sudden bounds, and no country has been metamorphosed in a night.

With our well-known eagerness for progress—given time, and the friendly advice of countries whose geographical position has enabled them to out-distance us in the race—we shall be able to secure gradual but continual improvements which will make Abyssinia great in the future as she has been throughout the past. But, if we try to go too fast, accidents may happen.

We should like to hear from the members of the League whether they think it right that means of pressure should be exerted upon us which they themselves would doubtless never accept.

We have the honour to bring to the notice of all the States members of the League of Nations the correspondence which we have received, in order that they may decide whether that correspondence is compatible with the independence of our country, inasmuch as it includes the stipulation that part of our Empire is to be allotted to the economic influence of a given Power. We cannot but realise that economic influence and political influence are very closely bound up together ; and it is our duty to protest most strongly against an agreement which, in our view, conflicts with the essential principles of the League of Nations.

Addis Ababa, this 12th day of Senié, in the year of grace 1918 (19th June, 1926).

TAFARI MAKONNEN,  
*Heir to the Throne of Abyssinia.*

No. 8

*Foreign Office to the Acting Secretary-General of the  
League of Nations*

SIR,

*Foreign Office, 3rd August, 1926.*

1. I am directed by His Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd July, with which you were good enough to transmit copies of the letter addressed to Sir Eric Drummond by His Imperial

Highness Ras Tafari, together with a protest in regard to the notes exchanged between the British and Italian Governments in December 1925 undertaking to afford each other mutual support when the consent of the Abyssinian Government is sought for the construction in Abyssinia of certain public works defined in the notes.

2. His Majesty's Government regret that, in spite of the assurances conveyed to the Abyssinian Government by the British and Italian Ministers at Addis Ababa when communicating the text of the Anglo-Italian notes, their purport should have been misconstrued and intentions attributed to the British and Italian Governments which they have never entertained. The Abyssinian protest is so worded as to imply that the British and Italian Governments have entered into an agreement to impose their wishes on a fellow-member of the League, even if against the latter's interests. Members of the League are asked to state whether it is right that pressure should thus be exerted on Abyssinia which they would, doubtless, repudiate if applied to them.

3. There is nothing in the Anglo-Italian notes to suggest coercion or the exercise of pressure on the Abyssinian Government. Sir Austen Chamberlain has stated in Parliament that the agreement was certainly not to be used and could not be used for the purpose of coercing the Abyssinian Government. He believed the agreement to be in the interests of all three parties, but added that of course the Abyssinian Government had a perfect right to judge of what was in the interests of Abyssinia. His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires was instructed by telegraph on the 14th July to bring these statements to the knowledge of Ras Tafari.

4. As to the suggestion that the British and Italian Governments are trying to force the Abyssinian Government to yield to their requests in a hurry and without being afforded time for reflection and study of the requirements of the Abyssinian people, I am to point out that in notes exchanged between the British Minister in Addis Ababa and the Abyssinian Government on the 18th March, 1902, the Emperor Menelik confirmed an oral undertaking, given some days previously, "that there is to be no interference with the waters of the Blue Nile and Lake Tsana except in consultation with His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Sudan; that in the case of any such interference, all other conditions being equal, preference will be given to the proposals of His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Sudan; and that His Majesty the Emperor Menelik has no intention of giving any concession with regard to the Blue Nile and Lake Tsana except to His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Sudan or one of their subjects." Since the date of this undertaking, which shows that twenty-four years ago the Emperor Menelik contemplated the construction by the British Government of a barrage

at Lake Tsana, His Majesty's Government have on several occasions made specific proposals in regard to this work, the full effect of which it is now possible to foretell as the result of the detailed observations which have been carried out by scientific missions despatched to the lake with the consent and assistance of the Abyssinian Government. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government feel that they cannot fairly be charged with proceeding in regard to Lake Tsana with undue precipitancy.

5. In the concluding paragraph of their protest the Abyssinian Government enquire whether the Anglo-Italian notes can be regarded as compatible with the independence of Abyssinia, especially when those notes state that a portion of Abyssinia will be "reserved" to the economic influence of a particular Power. Sir Austen Chamberlain desires to emphasise that the Anglo-Italian notes do not "reserve" any part of Abyssinia to Italian economic influence. His Britannic Majesty's Government, so far as they are concerned and under certain conditions, "recognise an exclusive Italian economic influence in the west of Abyssinia and in the whole territory to be crossed by the above-mentioned railway" (joining Eritrea and Italian Somaliland). This recognition cannot affect the rights of third parties or bind the Government of Abyssinia. It imposes no obligation on anyone except the British Government, who in return for the Italian undertakings in regard to Lake Tsana engage not to compete or support competition with Italian enterprise in the region specified.

6. Sir Austen Chamberlain will be happy to repeat these explanations and assurances to Abyssinia in the presence of the Council at its next meeting when it takes into consideration the note addressed to you by the Government of Abyssinia.

I am, &c.,  
JOHN MURRAY.

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